

From Fatherhood to Bachelorhood:
An Analysis of Masculinities in the 1950s U.S. through
Forbidden Planet, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, and
Playboy

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Abstract

This thesis investigates discourses on masculinity in the 1950s' U.S. against Elaine Tyler May's postulation that in the postwar years a policy of domestic containment ensured that white, middle-class Americans focused much of their energy towards the establishment and maintenance of the nuclear family. This thesis argues that while the policy of domestic containment was a forceful ideological message, other discourses on the changing role of men in the U.S. served to undermine the era's intense focus on heterosexual domesticity. By using three popular culture texts, *Forbidden Planet* (1956) *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *Playboy* (first published in 1953), this thesis looks at three discourses on white, middle-class, heterosexual men in terms of domesticity, work and consumption. Based on the three popular culture texts and their associated popular cultural, political and scientific discourses this thesis posits and explores an "individualism" discourse, a "maturity" discourse and a "bachelor" discourse on masculinity in the '50s. This thesis also argues that the formulation of a radical bachelor masculinity rested on socially sanctioned conceptions of masculinity derived from the maturity and the individuality discourse. This thesis will show how each of the three discourses legitimized their version of masculinity and show that domestic containment might have been a dominant message in the '50s, but that the public discourse on men's social roles did not univocally espouse men as involved fathers or loving husbands.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is an exploration of discourses on masculinity in the 1950s' U.S. The idea came from reading Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (1988). In this monograph, she presents her extensive research on what the policy of "domestic containment" was, and how it affected women and the family in the postwar/Cold War era. Her monograph's exploration of the linkages between popular culture, politics and the hopes and expectations of regular Americans inspired me to look into the '50s' discourses on men. Shortly after reading May's book, I watched the science-fiction classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956). Thus, being cognizant of Susan Sontag's assertion that "[s]cience fiction films are not about science...[t]hey are about disaster," this film recounted the story of one man squared off against alien, yet familiar, versions of what used to be his neighbors, colleagues, even his girlfriend.¹ From this, it seemed to me that that the "disaster" reflected in the story was not only what May found to be the strict ideological sanctions affecting the lives of the average American man and woman. The film was articulating a sense of anxiety over the pressures to adhere to a predetermined mode of being in a manner that specifically applied to American men.

I began to speculate that it was significant that the "pod people" in *Body Snatchers* were trying to convert a *male* hero into a submissive copy. Perhaps it wanted to tell us a transmuted story of men's fears of descending into the conformity and anonymity of the masses. Hence, I pursued the film's individualistic protagonist and found that this narrative engaged with a discourse that positioned itself in opposition to the perceived "collectivization" – and the implied "feminization" of such a development – of work and home in the 1950s' U.S. This led me to the overarching approach of this thesis: to investigate male-dominated instances of popular "texts", a term I use loosely to include film, in order to identify postwar ideals of masculine enactment through cultural articulations where men talk to, or about, middle-class men.

Largely, masculinity in the '50s' dominant discourse, as it reflects the pattern living for most men at the time, is beyond explicit interrogation. Hence, articulations of dominance mostly, but not exclusively, exist as utterances that delegitimize behaviors not consistent with the norm. However, in cases of *positively* representing oppositional discourses on masculinity I found that

¹ Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster." *Liquid Metal: The Science Fiction Film Reader*, ed. Sean Redmond

the narrative makes a point of the man's outsider role over and against domination and, as such sides with the individual over the group. Thus, I realized that in order for oppositional discourses on masculinity to make sense, I needed to present the contours of the dominant discourse of the era first. This rudimentary guideline led me to employ a movie released the same year as *Body Snatchers* to outline the dominant discourse on masculinity that May's *Homeward Bound* intimates. Hence, our point of departure is *Forbidden Planet* (1956) which is an example *par excellence* of the motif *Body Snatchers* reverses.

I found a third discourse on masculinity, which framed men in terms of occupation and domesticity and spoke to the changing circumstances of American men, in the pages of *Playboy*. The relative lack of popular culture artifacts – I did not find a movie with this exponent of manhood represented – which dealt with this masculinity is to a certain extent indicative of its marginality. However, I found *Playboy* interesting for the ways in which it built upon *Forbidden Planet* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*' discourses on masculinity, as well its own discursive resources, in order to gain cultural legitimization for its vision of how men should act. That the fantasy world of Hugh Hefner was such a sales success might indicate that the magazine's content resonated with American men who were longing for less constrained ways of living outside the dominant discourse's intense focus on family life.

Approach

By "domestic containment," May means the ideology that situated the family as a secure and stable mediator of the anxieties and uncertainties of the geopolitical climate in the early Cold War. These worries were related to nuclear power and the specter of female sexuality run amok. Consequently, domestic containment was to function as a simultaneous incentive to nuclear family formation and as a disincentive to the prospect of female sexuality not controlled by the bonds of marriage and motherhood. Thus, with this thesis I aim to complicate, though certainly not invalidate, May's conceptualization of "domestic containment" as a demonstrable and dominant discourse. I aim to displace the notion that the '50 was an era in which the *Father Knows Best* variant of American masculinity reigned supreme in public and popular culture discourse. As opposed to May's focus on women and the family, I will accomplish this by

showing instances of popular culture and public discourses' ambivalence on the '50s intensification of familial life as it pertained to men and masculinity

However, this thesis is not merely an attempt to disrupt May's concept of domestic containment, it is also a history of different, but not mutually exclusive, ways of negotiating positions for men in a climate of changing economic, social and sexual discourses. Furthermore, it is a look at what these positions entailed for men's relation to the sphere of work, the home and to the consumer market. It is an investigation of the discursive strategies for claiming authority as well as political and social legitimacy for these positions through the deployment of popular culture, scientific and political discourse. In addition, it is an exploration of the conditions of possibility for an oppositional discourse on masculinity to arise and, while disregarding that this type of masculinity might have been virtually impossible to realize – and contrary to many prevailing norms and practices of the era – existed as a potential masculinity. In other words, a secondary objective with this thesis is to show how our first two discourses, on familial masculinity and individualist masculinity, created, and drew on, culturally legitimate articulations of men's relations to home, work and the mass market, which could then serve in favor of a radical bachelor masculinity.

In my choice of variables such as social stratum, sexuality and race my focus is decidedly, like May's, on the discourses regarding the white, heterosexual middle class. Hence, I do not purport to have every discourse on masculinity covered as there are – among a plethora of other historically variable parameters – class-based, local, ethno-racial, sexual and regional schemas of masculine enactment, evidence of which, in many cases, falls outside public discourse. In addition, the time period considered will not be strictly limited to the ten years that comprised the '50s, but rather a variant of the "long '50s" which includes some precedents for discourses from the '40s insofar as they continued into the next decade. Hence, by selecting texts, in this case science fiction movies and gentlemen's magazines, that are about, and mostly written by, men I wish to approach questions concerning ways of being a man on the assumption that, in the '50s, older models of masculinity seemed threatened by the ballooning managerial class and the dwindling number of men employed as independent entrepreneurs and that men felt socially limited in this time of narrow emphasis on family values and togetherness.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 takes the findings from May's analysis of interviews from the Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS) and the public discourses she cites as espousing a message of domestic containment as manifest.² However, concerning domestic containment, I will refocus the object of inquiry by viewing it from the opposite side of the gender dichotomy. Therefore, this chapter explores the movie *Forbidden Planet* in terms of the dominant "adjustment discourse" or "maturity discourse" on masculinity. Moreover, the chapter will show how *Forbidden Planet* presents masculinity through the condemnation of the film's antagonist, and thereby disclose the film's discursive connections with ideals of *consensus* and the postwar redefinition of men's "roles" to incorporate "family" and "fatherhood." Moreover, this chapter will show the vital assistance provided by the psychological profession and the diffusion of its ideas into popular culture in the normalization of domestic containment.

The chapter will go on to discuss how *Forbidden Planet* and the wider discourse with which it engaged, presents the virtuousness of "the group", and sheds doubt on individualists, or anyone not conforming to the policy of domestic containment, instilling instead the family as the panacea to men's woes. *Forbidden Planet* also illustrates the joy of coupling and the promise of marriage. The chapter will examine this further by elaborating the dominant discourse's constitution of masculinity as firmly grounded in men's heterosexual virility and male heterosexual desire as a force of nature.

Chapter 3 examines how *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* advances "the social predicaments of [...] middle class [men]."³ Furthermore, the chapter details the film's links to an "individualism discourse" which identified, on the assumption that masculinity was predicated on the nature of men's work and play, that there were negative changes taking place in the mid-century U.S. Moreover, the chapter explores the changes believed to undermine male authority and autonomy and produced what men should avoid at all costs, *conformity*. What is more, the chapter elaborates how *Body Snatchers* offers a dramatization of the individualism discourse,

² The KLS interviews were conducted between 1935 and 1955 by psychologist E. Lowell Kelly. The group studied consisted of 600 white middle-class American men and women.

Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. (New York: Basis Books, 1988) p. 11, 12, 119

³ Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1985) p.183

and how its proponents worriedly contemplated that in an age of unprecedented wealth American society was besieged by a mass mentality that the (male) individual was increasingly unable to resist. Through *Body Snatchers* and the social critiques of, especially, David Riesman and William H. Whyte, the chapter will explore how it seemed to these intellectuals that the life of men was increasingly subject to pacifying forces through the supposed blight on American society called “suburbia.”

Moreover, I will explore how their skepticism towards suburbia related to their views on the changes in the organization of work and the prevalence of mass culture and consumption in the postwar years. Thus, as we move from the dystopian critiques of suburbia, to the coextensive phenomenon of the postindustrial organization of the workforce there emerges a certain “hard” and “rugged” ideal masculine type which the individualist proponents nostalgically evoke. This type of man, they feared, was dying out with the conformity-minded and gray-flannel-suit-wearing organization man who was more attuned to fulfilling others’ wishes than realizing his own desires.

Finally, chapter 4 deals with a masculine ideal extrapolated from the pages of *Playboy*. As this variant of masculinity was largely unattainable to – and, due to internalized norms, quite possibly unfeasible for – most middle-class white men, *Playboy* spoke to sexual and sensuous desires as well as a strong work ethic. The chapter discusses how *Playboy* was in some ways a reaction to, and in other ways a reconfiguration of, masculinity from the individualist discourse coupled with the sexual focus and consumer participation tacitly called for in the dominant discourse. In this chapter, we will see how independence and individuality emerged in a new form that could incorporate consumption and bachelorhood as modalities of masculinity.

This chapter also explores how *Playboy* constructed its vision of its masculinity by selectively reading Kinsey’s work on human sexuality and, especially, men’s sexual nature. Sharing Kinsey’s skepticism towards a “moralizing” culture, Hefner still operated on the premises of the dominant discourse on masculinity by underscoring men’s promiscuous proclivities. I contend that the large degree of acceptance of the syncretism and apparent impudence of *Playboy*’s construction of the “Playboy”, as we shall see, flouted the conventions so long as discursive precedent authorized it

Theory

At this point, it is necessary to delineate of the theories and criticisms surrounding the conceptualization of a term that is used extensively in this text, “masculinity.” R.W. Connell suggests that we should understand masculinity as a relational object that is meaningful insofar as we contrast it with femininity.⁴ Furthermore, he proposes that since the different ontologies of what is manly vary across cultures and this variation rules out the possibility of a “masculine entity.” Michael Kimmel urges us to consider masculinity as a “constantly changing collection of meanings that we construct through our relationships with ourselves, with each other, and with our world.”⁵

Furthermore, a term that will recur in this thesis is “dominant discourse” on masculinity. This should not be confused with Connell’s theory of “hegemonic masculinity”, a phenomenon he considers historically contingent and used to describe “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy [...]” What is more, hegemonic masculinity is underpinned by the “successful claim to authority,” meaning that hegemonic masculinity usually coincides with men that have institutional power and, thus, “cultural dominance.”⁶

However, in using “dominant discourse” we avoid Stephen Whitehead’s objections against the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Whitehead claims that Connell’s concept evinces a theoretical “circularity” which “posits an intentionality behind heterosexual men’s practices” which tends towards total and perennial dominance (i.e. patriarchy). Hence, Whitehead proffers that, in the view of hegemony theorists, regardless of whether any *one* man embodies this masculinity *all* men are sustaining it. Furthermore he suggests that gender scholars’ use of the concept circumvents any discussion as to *how* and *why* heterosexual men exercise, create and sustain dominance by simply positing a primordial “will-to-power” while implying that women and homosexual individuals possess no such will.⁷

⁴ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005) p.44

⁵ Michael Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity.” In *Theorizing Masculinities*, eds. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994) p. 120

⁶ Connell, *Masculinities*, p.77, 78

⁷ Stephen M. Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities: Key Themes and New Directions*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002) p. 92, 93

However, I am considering mediated, public discourse, to wit the dominant “ways of talking about men”, or “models of masculinity”, where men position themselves as “gender representatives” in positing rights and privileges for men as a political group.⁸ Still we need to clarify the concept of “discourse.” “Discourse” on masculinity, is the way in which a subject comes to know his- or herself as a possessor of a certain gendered identity. Moreover, discourses have the “capacity to signal what is possible to speak of and do at a particular moment and in particular cultural settings.”⁹ Consequently, we need to see the three negotiations of masculinity in the subsequent chapters of this thesis as expressing a “desire to change culture in order to maintain a “natural” gender order” through ways of talking about men and masculinities which “produce ‘truths’ and ‘knowledges’” by masculine subjects who believe in the correctness of their enunciations.¹⁰

To illustrate Michel Foucault’s point about “a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies” we may look at the discourse on the masculinity of the Playboy.¹¹ Hugh Hefner did not create conditions of the Playboy’s masculinity (no more than Kinsey did); he merely emphasized many of qualities associated with an articulation of dominance, such as heterosexuality and the discourse on men as supposedly having a natural inclination towards promiscuity. Therefore, considered against the masculinity of gay men, the heterosexual locus of *Playboy* masculinity contributed to its legitimacy and foreclosed its subjection to the dominant discourse’s repressive practices of border policing.

Kenneth Clatterbaugh’s observes that the problem of delineating extant masculinities is actually a problem of delineating of *perceptions* of masculinity. Consequently, he posits that a fruitful way of investigating masculinities may start by looking at images (in media, literature and religion) of behaviors, attitudes and beliefs that men exhibit.¹² In this thesis, as we consider the possible meanings of masculinity in the ‘50s, we will heuristically use Kimmel’s three model types – or images if you will – of American masculinities he posits on the basis of thorough research of the history of men in the U.S. In the discourses below, we will consider that even

⁸ Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 21, 59, 60

⁹ Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 103

¹⁰ Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 61

¹¹ Foucault in Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 104

¹² Kenneth Clatterbaugh, “What is Problematic About Masculinities.” In *Feminism & Masculinities*, edited by Peter F. Murphy. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 203

though these model masculinities have a historical grounding, they reappear as viable enactments of masculinity even none of our discourses really are *about* these types of masculinity.

The first model Kimmel proposes is the *Genteel Patriarch*. This man was the devoted father whose labor was scarcely necessary due to his inherent privilege as a member of the land-holding class.¹³ Much of his time went towards overseeing his land and doting on his family since, as an historical figure, the patriarch necessarily had slaves to work his fields. This figure is important for our exploration of the dominant discourse on masculinity of the '50s, as it contained a reservoir of meanings where a man could orient himself towards the domestic life and away from the urban areas without his peers perceiving him as feminine and without authority. However, I do not mean that the dominant discourse on masculinity in the '50s was *about* the Genteel Patriarch, but only that it featured elements from its enactment of gender.

Typically urban, the *Heroic Artisan* was an ideal of a physically imposing masculine figure. This was the manhood embodied by the “economically autonomous” craftsman, shopkeeper or yeoman farmer whose values were grounded in the republican tradition of a participatory democracy. The heroic artisan’s craft anchored his pride and masculinity. He performed his work on task-by-task basis and frowned at the time-oriented nature of the “wage slave.” Currarino notes that the ideal of the artisan still endures through the American celebration of the small-business owner and family farmer.¹⁴

The two examples of manhood above existed before the U.S. transition from an agrarian to a commercial economy. However, the type, which is ubiquitous in the discourses we will consider, is *Marketplace Masculinity*. Like the artisan, this gender enactment was rooted in the “sphere of production.” An entrepreneurial model of masculinity, Marketplace Manhood was “grounded in notions of free competition, acquisitive individualism, and the pursuit of self-interest, limited only by one’s talents and abilities and measured by economic performance.”¹⁵ This masculinity was constituted by a burgeoning middle class whose accomplishments in the market it used to define itself against the closed socio-economic groups of the landed gentry and craft guilds. However, as opposed to its original content, where Marketplace Manhood meant the creative, autonomous and entrepreneurial businessman who accumulated wealth, power and

¹³ Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia,” p. 120

¹⁴ Rosanne Currarino, “Artisan,” *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Bret E. Carroll. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2004) p. 37

¹⁵ Thomas Winter, “Market Revolution,” *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Bret E. Carroll. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2004) p. 283

status and followed a code individualistic initiative, the nature of work and the market changed during the postwar years and so did this ideal of manhood.

Masculinities in the 1950s: Scholarship and Sources

From the field of research on masculinity and gender in the 1950s I have drawn on several stellar articles and monographs in my own investigation of discourses on men. Barbara Ehrenreich's monograph *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* posits the counter-discourse on the single, sexually licensed male that manifested itself in the pages of *Playboy*.¹⁶ Ehrenreich was an inspiration in having parts of this thesis structured with *Playboy* and against May's domestic containment. *Hearts of Men* deals directly with the subversion of domestic containment through advocating and rehabilitating the figure of the bachelor. Moreover, Ehrenreich's text gave me the idea to look at the discursive affinity between the "playboy philosophy" and the masculinity championed in Kinsey's studies.

Furthermore, the influence of Ehrenreich runs through many of the texts that inform my elaboration of the dominant discourse on masculinity, such as the work of H. A. Overstreet, whose texts were so emblematic for the postwar year for their championing of male "maturity", and those of David Riesman and William Whyte, whose ideas were vital in establishing a critical voice against the mid-century belief in societal harmony. With Riesman and Whyte in mind – although I mostly leave partisanship out of this thesis – Richard Pells's *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* offered an invaluable overview of the field of liberal, anti-populist critics. Pells explores these intellectuals who deemed, on the basis of various observations that seemed to indicate that the exceptional individual (who was, invariably male) was being quashed in American society, the '50s to be a decade when a gloss of happiness concealed considerable emotional and psychological dislocations as a result of admonishments to be average.

In the chapter on dominant discourses on masculinity, I alternate between calling it the "maturity discourse" (from Overstreet via Ehrenreich) and the "adjustment discourse". The latter appellation comes from the work of historians Fred Matthews and Eli Zaretsky who greatly aided me in making the word "adjustment" apparent. This term cropped with such frequency in their

¹⁶ Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. (New York: Anchor Press, 1983)

research on the institutional discourse of psychology, psychiatry and counseling on wanting the mid-century American man to just “fit in” – not to mention its connection with Eisenhowerian consensus – that I thought it apt use it as one of the labels for the dominant discourse.

Besides Elaine Tyler May’s excellent monograph *Homeward Bound*, I also found another comprehensive source to help me get the big picture of what was going on in 1950s families in Stephanie Coontz’s *The Way We Never Were*. Moreover, Coontz does not limit herself temporally or spatially, often looking to countries other than the U.S. to show that there are other ways of organizing family life, and tracing the valuation of concepts such as “independence” and “interdependence” through several centuries of literature and philosophy. Additionally, Coontz was especially helpful in looking at the relation between changing nature of the American families in the ‘50s and how this was reflected in popular films.

Robert Griswold’s *Fatherhood in America* was a central source when looking at conceptions masculinity in terms of fatherhood, while Ruth Feldstein’s *Motherhood in Black and White*, although it is primarily about women, was an important aid in finding masculinist discourses which sought to ensure patriarchal authority. K. A. Cuordileone’s article on 1950s sexuality and politics, “Politics in an Age of Anxiety,” was a key source in showing that the supposedly gender-neutral discourses about individuality and conformity at the time were actually biased towards only discussing men.

Moreover, Cuordileone investigates the ways in which political culture formed a basis for a crisis-in-masculinity discourse in the Cold War. He examines Arthur J. Schlesinger’s *The Vital Center*, also an important source for Feldstein, and a host of other textual sources and finds in them a psycho-sexualized language cutting across the entire political spectrum in an effort to “toughen up” America’s men. In fact, Cuordileone mentions that Schlesinger had diagnosed men’s growing complacency and cowardice in a 1958 *Esquire* article called “The Crisis in American Masculinity.”¹⁷ Additionally, as one of Cuordileone’s major concerns is how political discourse played on the stigma and fear of homosexuality, his writing was a significant source in delineating the ways in which the dominant heterosexual discourse policed its borders.

In finding material on *Playboy* Elizabeth Fraterrigo’s *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* was invaluable. Fraterrigo’s extensive research on all aspects of

¹⁷ K. A. Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in Masculinity.” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 2 (Sep., 2000) p.522

the *Playboy* lifestyle, from its inception until the present, was an incredible source both for its exploration of the male consumer – which is an important aspect of this thesis – and for the gender implications of the Playboy’s sexual liberation. Moreover, in terms of showing the changes in men’s attitude towards consumption, Tom Pendergast’s *Creating the Modern Man* was an essential text in showing *Playboy*’s relation to other publications that had been conditioning men to practice less economic austerity and more consumption through advertising and promoting commodities as means to a better life.

Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to employ Steven M. Gelber’ research on the office worker’s contrast with the manual laborer or the artisan. His hypothesis rests, in part, on the myriad articles on home improvement that saturated the pages of magazines such as *Popular Science Monthly* and *Popular Mechanics*. In his work, which can be called a history of gender through material culture, he captures the popular conception that men needed physical challenges to be fully masculine (without this leading to an idealization of the blue-collar worker). What is more, Gelber investigates how, in the ‘50s, physical exertion through building furniture or remodeling the house provided a superior form of leisure – although many cited frugality as their motivation – as it entailed the masculine value of production.

According to Gelber, “Do-it-yourself provided at least a partial solution [to male domesticity] because household maintenance and repair permitted the suburban father to stay at home without feeling emasculated or being subsumed into an undifferentiated entity with his wife.”¹⁸ The suburban workshop, in the “home improvement” discourse, afforded spaces of homosociality, where men could partake in each other’s projects, which at once was within the home but with its no-women-allowed policy, an escape. Nevertheless, this is not suggest that DIY necessarily was a source of male pleasure. Masculinity, as Gelber reminds us, exists as conception of correct enactment of sex. This meant that, for men, engaging in various workshop projects nearly became a *requirement* for being sufficiently masculine.¹⁹

¹⁸ Steven M. Gelber, “Do-It-Yourself: Constructing, Repairing and Maintaining Domestic Masculinity.” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Mar., 1997) p.94 pp. 66-112

¹⁹ Gelber, “Do-It-Yourself,” p.100

Primary Sources

Directed by Fred McLeod Wilcox, *Forbidden Planet* was released in 1956 by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in Eastman Color and in the extra-wide CinemaScope format.²⁰ The film had a budget of roughly \$1,900,000 making it a reasonably expensive movie measured against the average production budget at the time. However, its budget is dwarfed when considering that *The Ten Commandments* and *Around the World in 80 Days*, both of which were released in '56, had budgets of approximately \$13.5 million and \$6 million, respectively.²¹ The plot of the movie is loosely based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.²² Robbie the Robot replaces the character Caliban as the servant (unlike Caliban, Robbie is not malevolent), while Dr. Morbius and Altaira are reimagined versions of, respectively, Prospero and Miranda. The film was an inspiration for Gene Roddenberry, whose *Star Trek* series featured a supraplanetary governing body called the United Federation of Planets. Consequently, that *Forbidden Planet* features a governing body known as the United Planets is no mere coincidence.

Directed by Don Siegel, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was also released in 1956 and had a budget of approximately \$350,000, which made it a low-budget piece of cinema, although it grossed over \$1.2 million domestically.²³ The original script did not have an ending that boded well for mankind. In order to make it less pessimistic Siegel introduced a framing device that showed that the protagonist made it to safety and was able to warn others about the pod people's colonization scheme. Its low cost contributed to its creative use of camera angles and settings. Shooting in black and white was a question of budgetary constraint as color processing was quite expensive at the time. However, with the monochromatic limitations they used high-contrast

²⁰ IMDB, "Forbidden Planet (1956)." *IMDBpro*, <<http://pro.imdb.com/title/tt0049223/maindetails>>. Accessed: 01.07.11; Victoria O'Donnell, "Science Fiction Films and Cold War Anxiety." *History of the American Cinema: The Fifties*, ed. Peter Lev. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003) p. 176

²¹ IMDB, "The Ten Commandments (1956)." *IMDBpro*, <<http://pro.imdb.com/title/tt0049833>>. Accessed: 01.07.11
IMDB, "Around the World in 80 Days (1956)." *IMDBpro*, <<http://pro.imdb.com/title/tt0048960>>. Accessed: 01.07.11

²² Patrick B. Sharp, "Darwin's soldiers Gender, Evolution and Warfare in Them! and Forbidden Planet." *Science Fiction Film and Television*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Autumn 2008) p. 225

²³ O'Donnell, "Science Fiction Films and Cold War Anxiety," p. 184; IMDB, "Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)." *IMDBpro*, <<http://pro.imdb.com/title/tt0049366/boxoffice>>. Accessed: 01.07.11
George Turner, "A Case for Insomnia." *ChiaroScuro*, <<http://www.celtoslavica.de/chiaroscuro/films/invasion56/invasion.html>>. Accessed: 04.07.11

lighting to achieve an ominous chiaroscuro effect that was made even more dramatic by shooting the scenes in enclosed, small rooms.

With a nude calendar shot of Marilyn Monroe, *Playboy* was first published on meager budget in December 1953 and continues its publication, although scaled back in number of issues per year, to the present day. In this text, we will mostly be concerned with issues that appeared from 1953 to 1960. *Playboy* was started by Hugh Hefner who, after having worked at the already established, but creatively and economically waning, gentlemen's periodical *Esquire*, thought he could do better by striking out on his own. Consequently, *Playboy*, from its first print-run of 70,000, had 300,000 paying readers only two years later, and over one million readers five years after that.²⁴ During the '50s, the magazine was not limited to pictures of nude women, though the glossy full-color centerfolds and pictorials were vital parts of *Playboy* package, the magazine also included, in Bill Osgerby's words, "a world of style-conscious, male consumerism" which was represented in lifestyle features with images of the latest in men's fashion, and the iconic and "luxurious Playboy Pads", between short stories and articles by esteemed authors and satirical pieces disparaging "gold-digging" women and marriage.²⁵

²⁴ Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 25; Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 42

²⁵ Bill Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon: Masculinity, Consumption and Interior Design in American Men's Magazines, 1930–1965." *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2005) p. 100; Vol. 1, No. 2 includes a short story; a Sherlock Holmes mystery by the some two-decades-deceased Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Also included in this issue is a piquant story from *The Decameron* by Boccaccio. Throughout the '50s *Playboy* introduced its readers to "Ribald Classics" with short stories by Guy de Maupassant and Voltaire. In addition, the magazine included original articles by Ray Bradbury ("The First Night of Lent," Vol. 3, No. 3, 1956), Arthur C. Clarke ("Rocket to the Renaissance, Vol. 7, No. 7, 1960) and an opinion piece by Jack Kerouac ("The Origins of the Beat Generation," Vol. 6, No. 6, 1959).

Chapter 2:

Forbidden Planet, Masculinity and Maturity

The sci-fi movie *Forbidden Planet* underscores the dominant discourse on masculinity in a number of ways. The film reflects an effort in popular culture to normalize the changes men had to make, as K. A. Cuordileone suggests, in order to accommodate that “the sources of an older male identity – based on individual initiative and achievement, autonomy and mastery, male prerogative in public life and patriarchal authority in the home – were eroding.”²⁶ Peter Biskind, who describes the film as a “Freudianized sci-fi version of *The Tempest*,” has analyzed it through popular and political discourses and identified it as a conservative film as it, like another postwar sci-fi film *The Thing from another World* (1951), favors the crew of soldiers over the lone and morally crippled scientist.²⁷ Thus, the film shows that there is salvation in the group, which through its ethos of cooperation and its established rules of interaction has an advantage over individual; it shows that inter-subjectivity is better than the lone and often twisted singular subjectivity.

Through the plight of *Forbidden Planet*’s tragic villain, we learn that not taking cues from others is a disposition concomitant with folly and hubris. Even worse, we learn, is the *individualist* whose belief in his own pre-eminence over the ignorant masses will cause him to fail as a family man, more generally, fail as an introspective and rational individual who can acknowledge and control his id. If this last statement seems a bit malapropos, I have provided a short summary below.

Plot Summary of *Forbidden Planet*

Around the year 2100 C.E. United Planets cruiser, 57-D is heading towards Altair IV, under the command of J.J. Adams (Leslie Nielsen) to look for survivors from the Bellerophon mission undertaken 20 years earlier. Despite receiving warnings to stay away, the ship touches down on the planet. Greeted by a dry-witted robot named Robby, they go to meet Dr. Morbius

²⁶ Cuordileone, “Politics in an Age of Anxiety,” p. 528

²⁷ Peter Biskind, *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties*. (London: Pluto Press, 1984) p. 108, 109

(Walter Pigeon) who relates that several years ago a mysterious force killed all members of the Bellerophon and destroyed the ship. It is revealed that Morbius and his wife, who had died many years after the others, had had a daughter, Altaira (Anne Francis). The scantily clad Altaira immediately piques the interest of United Planets pilot Jerry Farman (Jack Kelly).

The next day Farman encounters Altaira and decides to check if she can be “had.” Adams discovers them, and berates Farman for kissing her, making it clear that Adams has feelings for Altaira. She requites his feelings by wishing to please him, having Robby tailor a proper, full-length dress for her. The next day, the crew travels to confront Morbius about their equipment having been damaged during the night. Morbius tells them about the Krell who inhabited Altair IV millennia ago and the advanced technology they left behind. Unfortunately, by working on a machine that could translate thought into matter, the Krell unlocked a Pandora’s Box that led to their doom. The Krell’s inadvertently materialized their ids and caused their own annihilation.

It turns out that the force that was responsible for the crew’s death is a manifestation of Morbius’s unconscious. The movie culminates in Altaira declaring her love to Adams and her wish to leave the planet after witnessing her father’s erratic behavior. Then the id monster strikes and Morbius commands Robby to kill it. However, because Robby was programmed to be incapable of harming humans, his circuitry overloads. Morbius, Altaira and Adams seek safety behind a blast door. Nonetheless, Morbius’s id breaches the seal and lethally injures Morbius as he rushes forward to deny its existence. The monster disappears and, while in the throes of death, Morbius tells them to activate the self-destruct sequence of the Krell reactors, ensuring the annihilation the planet. The next scene shows Altaira safely in the arms of Adams onboard the cruiser, and Altair IV receding into the distance and growing, for an instant, brighter as it explodes.

Masculinity, Maturity and Adjustment

Mental health professionals used the term “adjustment” to denote the man “free of unresolved childhood conflicts, and therefore capable of reason and responsible action.” Additionally, as historian of science Fred Matthews notes about the preferred disposition of the white-collar man, “Karl Jung’s theory of personality types was reworked into an ideal of the extrovert, outward-turning personality as the mature individual capable of clear perception of

reality and collaboration with others.”²⁸ Moreover, this element of “adjustment” was also present in the discourse on child rearing. In Benjamin Spock’s *Baby and Child Care* (1946), the author observed that encouraging excellence was to be avoided for fear that the parents would frustrate their child and that he would grow up to not be able to defer his own goals in favor of the common good.²⁹

From Spock’s ideas, which had by the mid ‘50s enjoyed extensive discussion, Morbius is intelligible as the “frustrated” genius whose own upbringing had caused him to feel superior and, therefore, isolated from the world. By repeatedly touting his own intelligence, it is apparent *Forbidden Planet*’s Morbius is not well adjusted. That he regards himself as above the group is a fact that becomes acute in his reaction to “Doc” Ostrow (Warren Stevens) fatal injury from the Krell’s mental-boost machine. Discovering Ostrow on the floor he exclaims, “The fool! As if his ape brain could fathom the secrets of the Krell!” However, in the film, the military unit under the command of Adams is already “adjusted” to cooperating, and as we see in the end when Morbius is killed by his own repressed desires, this is for the best. Nevertheless, we need to look at why “adjustment” was so important for the average man who did not spend his days fighting evil space philologists (in the movie we learn that this is Morbius’s area of expertise).

In the institutional discourse on adjustment, we may see that this nomenclature of wanting men to “fit in” points beyond a desire to regulate of men’s psyches to suggest that men were adjusting *to* something. Indeed, human relations experts seeking to make the corporate setting and domestic life more manageable for men vigorously deployed the language of adjustment. This connects to what we noted in the introductory chapter about certain structural changes taking place in American society; men were increasingly employed in service-oriented work where cooperation and sociability were key attributes for a functioning office environment; the size and number of families in the U.S. was growing rapidly; and men were recognizing that the consumer market had become ubiquitous, which promoted a sense of anxiety about how to be masculine in an age where very few men could be in the business of “producing” and many were just “managing” and “consuming.”

Family-oriented discourse reflected – and promoted – the trends of increasing rates of marriage, as well a significant increase in people marrying at a young age. The Baby Boom

²⁸ Fred Matthews, “The Utopia of Human Relations: The Conflict Free Family in American Social Thought, 1930–1960.” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 24 (Oct., 1988) p. 349

²⁹ Matthews, “The Utopia of Human Relations,” p. 351, 358

occurred in the two decades following World War II, as the increasing birthrate was made possible by the postwar material abundance. This increase in prosperity affected couples' prospects of supporting a larger number of children – although the average number of children per family was only a “modest” 3.2, as May notes, this amounted to a boom when nearly everyone had three children – after the decade of thrift and concomitant declining birth rates during the Great Depression.³⁰ As such, the postwar years' focus on the family and fatherhood in television shows, movies, self-help literature and therapeutic discourse was not simply a cultural figment but represented the norm.

Thus, the discourse on adjustment was not only the province of the human relations expert but reflected a project happening on many fronts in a concatenating effort to redefine men's place in postindustrial society and reinforce “domestic containment.” As a part of the dominant discourse on men's need to alter their attitudes to fit the times, Harry Allen Overstreet's book *The Mature Mind* (1949), which sold over 500,000 copies over the three years after its release, introduced “adjustment” in an expanded and recoded version called “maturity” in order delineate what was expected of men in their social lives.

Overstreet advocated that the mature man was cooperative and responsible and had the capacity to balance “the domestic self, the business self, the religious self, the political self... housed in one body” and avoid these roles remaining “strangers to one another.”³¹ Moreover, he chastised the seriously weakened sense of masculinity among his fellow men that, he claimed, had fostered the “immaturity” he saw as the cause of, among other things, crime and promiscuity.³² From this, a key difference between “maturity” and “adjustment” becomes evident. Unlike “adjustment,” “maturity” included considerations of the many aspects and roles “being” a man entailed, and explicitly mentioned “the domestic self” as an important area of life into which men needed to invest time and effort. Overstreet commented, “A man is immature if he regards the support of a family as a kind of trap in which he, an unsuspecting male, has somehow been caught.”³³

³⁰ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 137

³¹ H.A. Overstreet in Irene Taviss Thomson, “Individualism and Conformity in the 1950s vs. the 1980s.” *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Sep., 1992) p. 501

³² Yvonne K. Rappaport, *Their Whole World was Their Classroom: The Contributions of Harry and Bonaro Overstreet to the Field of Adult Education*. Doctoral Thesis, Virginia Tech (May, 1998) p. 133; Martin Francis, “Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951–1963.” *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (July 2002) p. 36; Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 17

³³ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p.18

However, as in the discourse on adjustment, the discourse on maturity posited men in a static social setting. What had to be managed in order to attain the masculinity implied by maturity was internal; a man had to change the way he related to world and not expect to change the world or have the world change to suit him. This existential quality of “maturity” was manifested in the film *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957), which allegorically tells the tale of losing and regaining one’s masculinity. The film presents us with the businessman Scott Carey (Grant Williams) who, as a result of coming into contact with a radioactive cloud, has begun shrinking. Although he tries to fight the changes at first, he comes to accept that the changes to his stature do not compromise his integrity but requires of him acceptance and maturity in order to face challenges he will encounter as he becomes ever smaller.

Masculinity and Consensus

Buttressing the idea that adjusting to postwar U.S. society was the only sensible thing to do, *Life* magazine announced in 1957 editorial that the country had “the most abundant and most truly classless society in history.”³⁴ Such a statement, besides providing, according to historian Jonathan Katz, “a useful myth for a capitalist society that thrived on distinctions,” intimated that being in the “group” was almost a given.³⁵ Daniel Bell posited in 1960 that America had reached an equilibrium where partisanship and conflict over power and privilege - and the system that had managed such tensions, ideology – was a thing of the past.³⁶ Based on *Life* and Bell’s proclamations it seems that U.S. had seen the last of its growing pains, as the entirety of U.S. society had become one post-factional, inclusive, harmonious and collaborating “group” under the benevolence of the market.

Notwithstanding the fictional character of “classlessness”, it presented a potent utopian image that fed into the criticism, or the outright incomprehensibility, of anyone who tried to position themselves outside the order of capitalism – a force of good and the bedrock of a stable democracy. Furthermore, the discourse on classlessness underwrote the perception that in the ‘50s, prosperity had arrived or was at least imminent for everyone. True, in terms of purchasing

³⁴ “America – The Beautiful?” Editorial. *Life*, Vol. 42, No. 22 (Jun., 1957) p. 34

³⁵ Jonathan Katz, “Passive Resistance: On the Success of Queer Artists in Cold War American Art.” *Queer Cultural Center*, <<http://www.queerculturalcenter.org/Pages/KatzPages/KatzLimage.html>>. Accessed: 03.01.12

³⁶ Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)

power the median family income increased by thirty percent in the five years following WWII and a middle-class lifestyle seemed within reach for a growing number of Americans.³⁷

Although, in reality, as the standard of living increased across all demographics, the amount by which it rose favored white Americans.

This egalitarian and post-historic image of the U.S., thus, necessarily included the adjusted and mature man and his values of balance and rationality to maintain the status quo. Spock and Overstreet reflected this mood of progress in their belief that individuals and societies were perfectable and on their way to a harmonious, mature existence. T.W. Stace offered that the adjusted man was the “principal bulwark of Western democracy against fascism.”³⁸ This mature masculinity did away with heroic ideals that smacked of authoritarian excess (such as the proposed communist worker-hero worship in *Stakhanovism*) and a romantic engagement with the myth of the “self-made man”. It was now suggested that the masculine ideals that bore the longing traces of Thoreau, Emerson, Hearst and Rockefeller, men who had been revered for many decades for their self-reliance, aggressiveness and strong desire to compete, was an effect of socialization – or lack thereof.

Adjusting Men to Maturity

The dominant discourse of containment in the ‘50 registered that men’s changing roles in the consumer- and service-oriented economy were capable of causing a state of friction in relation to more distinguished models of masculinity based in the sphere of production. Eli Zaretsky notes that the postwar years’ ideological message reflected efforts to “resanctify the heterosexual family, investing domesticity with deep personal, ethical, and sexual meanings previously attached to extrafamilial forms of personal life.”³⁹ Adjustment, then, was to ensure that men did not feel that their labor in the postindustrial workplace was devoid of meaning, while “maturity” meant that if men still found their office jobs meaningless, then the family could be a site where the new men could draw their masculine identity.

³⁷ Shelley Nickles, “More is Better: Mass Consumption, Gender, and Class Identity in Postwar America.” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Dec., 2002) p. 584

³⁸ Matthews, “The Utopia of Human Relations,” p. 350

³⁹ Eli Zaretsky, “Charisma or Rationalization? Domesticity and Psychoanalysis in the United States in the 1950s.” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Winter, 2000) p. 331

Although family, heterosexual coupling and sexual reproduction – that is to say fatherhood, and motherhood – were always-already inscribed in social relations and an integral element of masculinity, the *nuclear* family was, however – with its intense focus on child-rearing and the promotion of “togetherness” (in recreation) of the mother-father-child(ren) unit – an invention of the postwar period.⁴⁰ As such, the social entity of the nuclear family needed to be normalized so that men could draw a masculine identity from a familial context within which they had heretofore not functioned (or at least not urged to function),.

Film and television promoted adjustment to the nuclear family, as Coontz notes, by crafting stories that showed “people working through conflicts between marital loyalties and older kin, peer group or community ties” and their invariable resolution in favor of the heterosexual couple and to the exclusion of “extended kinship networks,... homosociability and friendship.”⁴¹ Still, when the concept of the nuclear family was a given, cultural texts aided in making it seem a matter of fact that men remained authoritative and fulfilled within the confines of the ostensibly “feminine” sphere that this social arrangement entailed.

The TV industry and Hollywood were involved in presenting narratives that naturalized a masculine identity grounded fatherhood. Television focused on men within the nuclear family, showing that the man at home was secure in his masculinity as a contented figure that dispensed sage advice and cared for his children. May comments that by only showing men in domestic settings (and letting their work life remain unexplored, through it was evident that they were breadwinners), popular TV shows like *Ozzie and Harriet* (1952–1966) and *Father Knows Best* (1954–1960) emphasized the male characters’ position as fathers.⁴² However, Hollywood mostly took the opposite route and displayed the disorders of men who had not established their own nuclear families. Peter Biskind notes that from the ‘40s to the ‘50s Hollywood studios changed many of the roles for actors who had earlier been typecast as revered loners and outcasts into characters who were outsiders because of mental health issues such as neuroses or psychoses.⁴³ For example, in the film *In a Lonely Place* (1950) Humphrey Bogart played against his own

⁴⁰ Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. (New York: Basic Books, 2000) p. 25

⁴¹ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, p. 26

⁴² May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 146

⁴³ Biskind in Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, p.27

history of being type-cast as a cynical and isolated hero, by reimagining the stereotypically sly, witty and womanizing character as motivated by desperation and emotional immaturity.⁴⁴

Psychology and Masculinity

Lending itself to an atomized public discourse that tended to render the individual “culturally inert,” psychoanalytic theory elaborated and strengthened the discourse on gender in terms of domestic containment.⁴⁵ As we noted above, the belief in the efficacy of “adjustment” stemmed from a discourse largely carried out in a therapeutic setting. However, adjustment also dominated the non-therapeutic, descriptive discourse of psychology, although with a stronger accent placed on “maturity.” Zaretsky posits that the mental health professions in the ’50 were predicated on a conservative “rationalization” of a postindustrial society. Sociologist Philip Reiff mournfully observed that America’s dependence on mental health professions for guidance in all of life’s mundane aspects had in the ’50s created a “therapeutic culture” which for the average American meant “resign[ing] yourself to living within your moral means ... suffer[ing] no gratuitous failures in a futile search for ethical heights.”⁴⁶ The mental health professions had quite possibly become, as Foucault noted, a “science subordinated in the main to the imperatives of morality whose divisions it reiterated under the guise of the medical norm.”⁴⁷

However, the mental health professions’ ostensible cultural “blindness,” suggests that they could operate in opposition older theories about men which only considered them in their, to use Talcott Parson’s term, “instrumental” functions (as wage earners). Conversely, the psychological professions had a vocabulary to deal with the masculinity of “private life,” or men in their “expressive” functions (as nurturers), constituted by the interaction between family members. With its store of theory, psychoanalysis and psychiatry could suggest ways the “shrinking man” could find renewed purpose in his wife and children, and cure society of individuals such as Morbius who considered themselves above and apart from society, and produce rational men such as Commander Adams. Furthermore, as opposed to sociology, psychology could not account for “the masses” or theorize America’s reorientation towards a

⁴⁴ Fred Matthews, “The Utopia of Human Relations,” p. 354

⁴⁵ Zaretsky, “Charisma or Rationalization?” p. 331

⁴⁶ Zaretsky, “Charisma or Rationalization?” p. 339

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) p. 53

consumer economy. This meant that psychology did not articulate a macro-scale exploration of the political or structural discourses on the changing *content* of masculinity, but urged men to change their minds *about* masculinity.⁴⁸

An example of how psychology and psychiatry were oriented around adjustment, the nuclear family and fatherhood can be seen in their efforts to treat male GIs after WWII. The mental health professions operated on the assumptions that, as one psychologist noted at the time, one could see from nature that men's role as providers was ordained by nature, as numerous examples from the animal kingdom could attest, and that invariably, across all of recorded history, fathers had been protecting and providing for their families.⁴⁹ The mental health professions were enlisted to attend to the masculine fallout after the war from those "de-civilized" veterans who had to adjust to everyday life and those who suffered from combat "exhaustion." Consequently, much of this effort towards staving off the possibly dire outcomes of maladjusted veterans roaming about in civil society was predicated on installing the GI in a position within what was believed to be the curative container of the nuclear family. The extreme case was the war-plagued non-married GI who had to be saved from meaningless non-masculine existence of bachelordom. Through therapy, psychology was to equip this man with the sufficient mental wherewithal to attain gainful employment and enough stability to establish a family where he would be in his natural seat of authority as father and provider.⁵⁰

Apart from Jung's ideal of the affirmation-seeking and affable man, we should consider that even though psychoanalysis was firmly embedded in American society's gender prescriptions there was already inscribed in the bedrock of psychoanalysis a trans-historical imperative for men to provide. Thus, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud presents a scenario where, in a world without family and social institutions, men are in a state of barbarianism. Hence, he maintained that when working efficiently, social life sublimates the excesses of the male sexual energy into civilization's productive endeavors.⁵¹

However, Freud's theories, which highlighted that men that men were naturally aggressive and exploitive, were in the dominant ego-psychological discourse reformulated so

⁴⁸ Ian Nicholson, "'Shocking' Masculinity: Stanley Milgram, 'Obedience to Authority,' and the 'Crisis of Manhood' in Cold War America." *Isis*, Vol. 102, No. 2 (Jun., 2011) p. 243

⁴⁹ Therese Benedek in Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 15, 16

⁵⁰ May, *Homeward Bound*, p.88; Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) p. 263

⁵¹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1962) p. 52

that these attributes were seen as, in adults, neurotic traits. Thus, for men to manage these primordial instincts was to be healthily masculine and worked to men's advantage in the world of the marketplace and at home. Hence, through the development of a simplified American ego psychology it was suggested that men's supposedly callous nature could be augmented from immature aggression to responsible adulthood. The adjustment precepts of ego psychology ensured that "desire" became a vulgar drive that mature men had transcended through the mediatory ego. The changeable nature of men, then, assured that if men felt in some way diminished by being a cog in an organizational machinery, all that was wrong was that negative emotions either dictated by the superego or the id were causing "tension"; as Zaretsky notes, "they were issues that ego psychology... described as intrapsychic and familial" and fully resolvable.⁵² American psychoanalytic discourse proffered that "maturity" was not only an indication of moral rectitude, as in Overstreet, but of mental health. The human-relations experts' benchmark of maturity encouraged introspection and urged men to consider their own emotions seriously.

The "Monster from the Id" and Morbius as a Failed Father

The ideas of psychology pervaded popular culture, with lay practitioners in advice columns and celebrity gossip columns who diagnosed, with words that were becoming ever more used in informal settings, "narcissism", "inferiority complexes" and "mother fixations."⁵³ After all, psychologist Charles Baudouin was confident enough about its predominance to boast in 1956 issue of *Time* magazine that "[m]odern man cannot conceive of himself without Freud" and the discipline's jargon had formed an intelligible supply of signifiers for a public that was increasingly exposed to popular versions of psychological theory.

That popular culture was influenced by psychoanalysis is also evident from *Forbidden Planet* and its depiction of Morbius's destructive *id*. Freud posited that the id was the unorganized part of man's psyche that contained his primary drives. Freud believed that the id was the only part of the human mind that was active at birth; the infant's singular mental impetus was to slake his immediate desires. In this regard, it becomes evident that the unusual strength

⁵² Zaretsky, "Charisma or Rationalization?" p. 354

⁵³ For a commentary on how psychology has made a wide impact in postwar America see: "There's Danger, too, in Psychiatry." *Changing Times: The Kiplinger Magazine*, Vol. 10, No. 5 (May, 1956) pp.25–28

and activity of Morbius's id might indicate an infantile personality disorder. Louis Bromfield, agriculturalist, vociferous social critic and hobby psychologist, would surely agree.

Bromfield attacked the scholar's lack of maturity, and implicitly his masculinity, by noting: "The mind of the 'intellectual' has a strange distorted psychology. They are gifted with a capacity for intense and intellectual thought on the one hand and handicapped by childishness on the other."⁵⁴ The scholar, besides having long history of being the favored target of populist polemicists, also embodied a type of man that was criticizing society U.S. for the mental lull of the middle class. *Forbidden Planet*, therefore, presents a not-so-veiled dig at those otherworldly malcontents who were threatening the postwar era's alleged societal harmony by insisting that prosperity and postindustrial work were not necessarily benign when it came to developing the American character. Both Bromfield and *Forbidden Planet* posit that these critical academics had psychological issues that made them feel alienated and paranoid and, thus, were not to be taken seriously.

In the film, Adams explains to Altaira: "We're all part monster in our unconscious," it is apparent that, unfortunately, Morbius was incapable of keeping his "monster" at bay. However, that all people supposedly had monsters in their unconscious did not mean that they should all fall prey to them, but rather know them and learn to control them. When Biskind proffers that the film shows a certain Freudian and Christian pessimism in its view of human nature and the futility psychological therapy he forgets that the film shows the United Planets crew (especially Ostrow and Adams) as rational and in control. Therefore, he neglects the fact that it *only* Morbius's id which poses a danger in the movie and therefore it is on the basis of Morbius's over-intellectualized and childish psyche the id is given free reign.⁵⁵ (We may postulate that the Krell were so "advanced" that they, like Morbius, had forgotten about the baser instincts of man) In this regard, Adams embodies masculine maturity for having been conditioned by the functions of his ego – not the "ego" of selfishness, but the mediating "ego" of rational thought – while Morbius's mixture of childish insolence of the id and lofty ideals of the superego makes him immature and impervious to reason.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Louis Bromfield, *A New Pattern for a Tired World*. (New York: Arno Press, 1972) p. 33

⁵⁵ Biskind, *Seeing is Believing*, p. 110

⁵⁶ Sharp, "Darwin's Soldiers," p. 227

Morbius's "immaturity" is manifested through his unchecked id, which has caused him to fail Altaira as a father. The ship's doctor, Ostrow, expresses his concern that Altaira's casual behavior around the crew might stir the sex-starved men into a frenzy by informing Morbius that "we young men have been shut up in hyperspace for well over a year" and, while ogling Altaira, remarks that "from here the view looks just like heaven." (1:14:38) Anxiously, Morbius replies: "Yes, I suppose one day I shall be obliged to make the trip to earth with her for the sake of her natural development." (1:14:10) However, Morbius has deliberately kept Altaira away from human males and, furthermore, it is implied that he has "poisoned the well" by telling her that Earth men are only after sex. Morbius is shown as the aloof and emotionally distant father who has been unable assume responsibility for his daughters well-roundedness. His lack of an ego which negotiates between primal instinct to protect his daughter and his intellectual pursuits has rendered Morbius's incapable of "rationally" processing corporality or indeed anything that has to do with the human body (as evidenced by his fascination with the Krell machine that effectively circumvents the need for the body by transforming thoughts into matter).

This lack of a rational center has made Morbius unable to deal with the fact that Altaira has come of age as a fetching, young woman. Patrick B. Sharp notes, "Altaira's beauty and ignorance of proper gendered behavior... [is] a threat to the stability of the all-male military hierarchy of the C-57-D."⁵⁷ This is not only a comment which illuminates that Morbius has failed to provide Altaira with the nuclear family that was supposed counteract "dangerous" female sexuality in the '50s, but also reflects that her lack of proper discipline has effectively, if we place Altaira in a mid-century American city, made her into a delinquent. This suggests an affinity between Altaira and the malevolent madams who manipulate men in the film noirs of the '40s. However, as opposed to femme fatales, whose encounters with men are motivated by a non-specified cynical greed, the innocent Altaira does not understand seduction. Her advances are only made in the spirit of curiosity.

However, Ostrow and, not least, Adams, civilize Altaira by teaching her to dress and act properly. They represent culture and impose a surrogate for domesticity in lieu of Morbius failure to do so. Besides presenting us with the conflict between Morbius's immature idealism and Adams's mature pragmatism, the film sides with traditions and customs as constitutive of order and, since the military personnel are the heroes, the latter is inscribed as positive.

⁵⁷ Sharp, "Darwin's Soldiers," p. 225

Fatherhood and Masculinity

Overstreet's prescriptions for maturity, then, spoke to a common situation among American in the '50s. It was assumed that the man of a certain age was going to get married and sire children and upon this premise Overstreet urged that men become "heroic" fathers who provided for, *and* had close relationships with, their families.⁵⁸ As psychoanalyst Smiley Blanton wrote in his 1956 bestseller *Love or Perish*, "the role of the good parent ... is the capstone of maturity."⁵⁹ However, the masculine imperative of breadwinning was an important part of maturity, and if some men were finding that they had become too well adjusted to the postindustrial workplace, messages to men that their active participation in the nuclear family was necessary abounded.

Psychological studies posited that some fathers had failed their children by not ensuring that they had an emotional and meaningful relationship with them. This is not to say that all messages to expectant or already established fathers bore a negative subtext. May comments that there were magazine articles that looked at the joys of being a relatable presence in your children's lives and proffered that in influencing their sons and daughters' development, men could find autonomy and fulfillment not dreamt of in their office jobs.⁶⁰ Talcott Parsons, a leading sociologist at the time, emphasized the essential need for the nuclear family for a thriving society and argued that the solution to many men's daily woes was that they work less and instead focus on instilling a healthy masculinity in their sons.⁶¹

However, if there were salubrious accounts of fatherhood there were many more that emphasized that a man, as an exemplar of manliness, was needed at home to influence his sons and in general contribute to proper sex-role socialization. As Jhan and June Robbins observe in a 1958 issue of *Popular Science*, boys needed their father to pattern their behavior on a "model male figure" lest the child became a delinquent.⁶² Moreover, much of the literature that emphasized the need for domestic masculinity did so against the threat that excessive mothering

⁵⁸ Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History*. (New York: Basic Books, 1993) p. 186

⁵⁹ Smiley Blanton in Thomson, "Individualism and Conformity in the 1950s vs. the 1980s", p. 503

⁶⁰ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 148

⁶¹ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. (New York: The Free Press, 1996) p. 228

⁶² Jahn Roberts and June Robbins, "Why Girls are so Good." *Popular Science*, Vol. 172, No. 1 (Jan., 1958) p. 161

had the potential of turning America's sons into feeble individuals.⁶³ The prospect that children who received too little masculine input from their fathers become criminals or mindless devotees to evil ideologies was also a potent buttress to containment and was echoed in expert communities. Without the father present as a role model, Willard Waller and Spock forecasted an increase number of delinquent girls and effeminate boys.⁶⁴

The role of men as fathers was brought into a political context by linking it with fears about totalitarianism's potential for growth in the U.S. After WWII, there appeared a spate of books concerned about the capacity for American society to breed individuals that were as weak-willed as those in Nazi Germany. Among these was *The Authoritarian Personality*, published in 1950 under the direction of Theodor Adorno. From this study, it transpired that fatherhood could not be based breadwinning alone and that men had to engage with their sons, lest the mother drove her sons into the embrace of totalitarianism. They argued that the father had to overcome the cloying mother's influence and assert his authority, thereby strengthening his own and his son's masculinity.⁶⁵ However, the authors advised that the father's presence in his children's lives should balance authority with compassion. Failure to do so, they concluded, would damaged the next generation's masculinity and could result in too much aggression or weakness of mind which could be channeled or exploited through the violence and obedience required in a totalitarian state.⁶⁶

The same dynamic could be found in studies on the roots of prejudice, a theme that also received a tremendous amount of attention in the wake of WWII. Studies found that racism was instilled in men who had a pathological immaturity that bordered on effeminacy. They proposed this immaturity was attributable to male children growing deficient in masculinity in their fathers' absence. In this matrix of gender and prejudice, healthy masculinity meant a colorblind adherence to the principles of equality and a belief that racism arose due to "maternal pathology". With the prevalence of racist attitudes in the postwar U.S., the only conclusion was that without proper input from their fathers mothers had created unmanly men who were prone to feminine irrationality and a "sissy complex". Consequently, these men had been made outwardly

⁶³ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 146

⁶⁴ Mike Chopra-Grant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir*. (London: I.B. Tauris Publishing, 2006) p. 67

⁶⁵ Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*, p. 49

⁶⁶ Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, p. 57, 58; Robert Genter "We All Go a Little Mad Sometimes": Alfred Hitchcock, American Psychoanalysis, and the Construction of the Cold War Psychopath." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2010) p. 143

submissive and inwardly aggressive and, hence, prone to “overcompensation” and violent behavior towards “socially sanctioned scapegoats.”⁶⁷

Policing the boundaries of the normative masculine subject legitimized the social sanctions against men who could not show the “proper” credentials of having established a family. According to a maturity-predicated psychoanalysis such aberrant behaviors and attitudes were indications that men were sick and in need of rehabilitation. Hence, the non-masculine social role for a man that did not involve marriage and children, Barbara Ehrenreich notes, was in the continuum between the transitional role of the “immature” man, who was too aggressive for not having properly internalized his father as his superego, and the homosexual, who was too passive and effeminate for never having appropriately separated from his mother.⁶⁸ In a time when, as Victoria Hesford suggests, an ill-defined atomic threat from the Soviet Union had its counterpoint in the myths of “the naturalness and rightness of heterosexual coupledness”, the marriage and fatherhood was compulsive.⁶⁹ Even more so was the verity that the single man of a certain age could expect to be additionally stigmatized because not only was he vulnerable to suspicions of homosexuality but also of being a communist conspirator, a traitor to the U.S. as the decade’s political rhetoric had managed to make “homosexuality” and “infiltrator” virtually synonymous.⁷⁰

Affirming Masculinity – Policing Women

In the postwar years, men were offered a degree of fluidity in the enactment of masculinity, in that they could now be private individuals and play a greater role in the lives of their children.⁷¹ Furthermore, as Robert Griswold notes, in the white middle-class, the notion of fathers’ nonauthoritarian involvement in child rearing was becoming increasingly popular.⁷² However, this did not mean that commerce between the private home and the public sphere of

⁶⁷ Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*, p. 55

⁶⁸ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p.20

⁶⁹ Victoria Hesford, “Patriotic Perversions : Patricia Highsmith's Queer Vision of Cold War America in ‘The Price of Salt’, ‘The Blunderer’, and ‘Deep Water’”. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3/4 (Fall–Winter, 2005) p. 216

⁷⁰ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 98

⁷¹ Robert Griswold, “Fatherhood.” *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Bret E. Carroll. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2004) p. 163

⁷² Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, p. 187

.e.g. work eroded as discourses on women still maintained their sheltered domesticity as a part of masculinity's premises is the necessary opposite of femininity.

Looking at masculinity and fatherhood from the other side of the gender barrier, the urgency of the message of the infallibility of the sexual division of labor was in part strengthened due to the Depression and early years of the Second World War. These events facilitated a rearrangement of the sexual division of labor that threatened to undermine the power men reaped as sole breadwinners. Wartime production, market expansion and an officially sanctioned wartime promotion of female labor – in the absence of available men – had enabled women's entrance into the workforce and the spatial, if not occupational, desegregation of gender in the job market and, thus, facilitated a female liberation of sorts. Moreover, despite postwar efforts towards coaxing women back into the home, and in some cases even forcing women out of work to accommodate returning male GIs, women were entering the job market in increasing numbers throughout the '50s. The percentage shares of women participating in the labor force increased from 28.5 in 1940 to 34.5 in 1960, and for 1940, 35.9 percent of those were married women while in 1960 this figure had grown to 60 percent.⁷³

Hence, attempts were made, such as in Psychiatrist Marynia Farnham and sociologist Ferdinand Lundberg's enormously popular and best-selling *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* published in 1947, to safeguard the masculine prerogative of economic control and the imperatives of the heterosexual familial arrangement. Their message serviced upholding the involved father while stigmatizing the working mother. According to Farnham and Lundberg, the working mother was usurping the role of breadwinner and robbing men of the "aggression, dominance, independence and power" men needed in their work life, and becoming, in their judgment, "masculinized."⁷⁴ Moreover, in an alarmist article in *Life* from 1956 about changing roles in marriage, the author and his team of mental health experts declare that mothers who pursue careers are ridden with deep-seated guilt and dissatisfaction that will cause them to overcompensate the other way and coddle their sons too much.

They go on to suggest that women and men must understand that the maintenance of boundaries for the wife was of the utmost importance. They predicted that, if left unchecked, the tragedy of this "unnatural" gender state would be compounded and perpetuated as women with

⁷³ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 227 n. 37

⁷⁴ Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947).

<http://web.viu.ca/davies/H323Vietnam/The_Lost_Sex.1947.htm>. Accessed: 02.10.11

“masculine-aggressive” characteristics tended to choose to enter into relationships with emasculated men who, like them, had been raised by ubiquitous matriarchs and sissified fathers. Thus, completing the circle, their children would be subjected to a domineering mothers and feckless, henpecked fathers.⁷⁵ Moreover, this discourse ensured social scrutiny of the man who “allowed” his wife to work outside the home. Consequently, this meant that when a man was not the sole provider he was exposed to suspicions that he was feminized and without the capacity to adequately provide for his family.

Masculinity, Sex and Domestic Bliss

Many analyses of *Forbidden Planet* have concluded that the film is interesting insofar as Morbius is the motor of a thinly veiled story about incest. Margaret Tarratt notes that Morbius’s “suppressed incestuous desires are clearly implied to be at the root of all the trouble,” and Tony Williams comments that the “monster from the id represents her father’s incestuous desires unacceptable to civilization.”⁷⁶ Jane Caputi’s argument that *Forbidden Planet* is a metaphor of incest and its relation with the nuclear family is more compelling in that it points beyond the film to a possible dynamic inherent in American domesticity.⁷⁷ A problem with this reading is that it forestalls a historically contingent interpretation by obscuring the fact that the solution to the conflict in the film is to establish a budding nuclear family by coupling Altaira and Adams thus supplanting the dysfunctional domesticity of Morbius and Altaira.

Nevertheless, seen in a historical perspective, the less obtuse point that *Forbidden Planet* advances about sex was the openness with which it was discussed in the ‘50s. However, as Fraterrigo observes, “The codes governing sexual morality at mid-century affirmed heterosexual desire but confined it within a framework of marriage.”⁷⁸ As such, male sexuality and its satiation received an unprecedented amount of attention during the ‘50 – evident from the film

⁷⁵ Robert Coughlan, “Changing Roles in Modern Marriage.” *Life*, Vol. 41, No. 26 (1956) p.110

⁷⁶ Margaret Tarratt, “Monsters from the Id.” In *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003) p. 347

Tony Williams, “Female Oppression in ‘Attack of the 50-Foot Woman’”. *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Nov., 1985) p. 266

⁷⁷ Jane Caputi, “Unthinkable Fathering: Connecting Incest and Nuclearism.” *Hypatia*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Spring, 1994) p. 117

⁷⁸ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 36

when Ostrow lustfully observes Altaira. Moreover, the dominant discourse included the consideration that men's sexually aggressive behavior was foundational for masculinity, and that sexual satisfaction was of the utmost importance for the constitution of domestic bliss. May, in emphasizing that it was women's duty to ensure that the man would not "stray," notes that women were expected to provide sexually fulfilling marriages so that men would not be tempted by "degenerative seductions" like pornography or prostitution.⁷⁹

Nonetheless, as male sexuality was posited as a simple, but constantly engaged, force it did not receive much elaboration per se. Rather discourse was organized around how the man's sexual needs could best be served, which meant that in marriage the various techniques of titillation were to be provided by women. Consequently, although this proliferation of sexually themed texts in the mainstream press was "liberation" in terms of subject, it was premised, as May noted, on women showing their submission by pleasing men and being at their disposal for sex. Hence, purveyors of expert opinion advanced the ambivalent position that although men were expected to be good fathers, rational cooperators and devoted husbands they had certain physical needs that had to be met if they were to carry out their role optimally.

Illustrating that the era were not a time of prudishness, in a 1956 article from *Popular Science* the author explains – for all intents and purposes, to men – why their wives are not always in the mood for sex. In granting men sexual license, the article goes to great lengths to show that the male threshold for sexual excitation is virtually non-existent (a whiff of perfume is enough) and explains this as result brain structures specific to males.

However, it offers a conciliatory tone which asks that the husband understand that his wife is not as easily aroused as he is, and assuages the husband that once his wife understands that he is not "depraved" for wanting sex so often their marriage will be bulletproof.⁸⁰ Hence, the article promulgates the dominant view that the heterosexual married couple is the normative venue for sex while also managing to underscore that men are sexual beings. Also, it performs a double discursive operation as this particular iteration contributes to establishing normative behaviors for women, thus defining them as less sexually inclined than men and creating *expectations* of gender behavior rather than merely reporting on them.

⁷⁹ May, *Homeward Bound*, p.97

⁸⁰ John Kord Lagemann, "Why a Wife Says 'No.'" *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. 169, No. 2 (Aug., 1956) p. 114

Farnham and Lundberg, in a spirit less inclined towards negotiation, noted how women had to structure her desire around the man's wishes. Moreover, they suggested that women had to stop denying the primacy of the phallus as this refusal resulted in penis envy. Hence, they submitted that as "[a woman] wish[es] herself to possess the organ upon which she must thus depend militates...greatly against her ability to accept its vast power to satisfy her when proffered to her in love."⁸¹

Men and Consumption

However, masculinity's relation to consumption was also in need of a reorientation from a masculine ethic that considered commodity purchases frivolous and linked to feminine vanity. We may interpret Morbius's disdain for what to him seems the quotidian business of regular work as evidence for the ongoing process of teaching men to value their own "real" work and consumption through morality tales. Morbius's preoccupation with the Krell machine that directly transforms thoughts into matter ensures that he meets the same end as the machine's inventors. Biskind notes that film presents technology that "has gone too far" but also observes that the film does not consider technology essentially bad (Robby, for instance is treated as a technical marvel without any drawbacks). Rather the problem lies in Morbius not being able to handle the technology appropriately; his immature dream is to short-circuit capitalism and the marketplace.⁸²

Furthermore, the explicit politicization of purchasing goods, rather than producing them, aided in removing its feminine connotations. This economic discourse ensured that consumerism was masculine by defining it as antithetical to communism. Thus, men's participation in the consumer market was to become interwoven in an idea of social and political stability predicated on an ethic of "work[ing]-to-consume".⁸³ American men's sense of masculinity needed not be at odds with the changing economy. The discourse on adjustment and maturity ensured as the nature of work was irrelevant insofar as the income was ample enough to provide the goods the family needed.

⁸¹ Farnham and Lundberg, *Modern Woman*.

⁸² Biskind, *Seeing is Believing*, p. 109

⁸³ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 164

Moreover, that consuming was a type of behavior that took place in a context of ideology and international politics was in no small way expressed through the “Kitchen Debates” of 1959. Vice president Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev debated the relative merits of their respective systems, with the former pointing out the prevalence of consumer durables in U.S. homes as an indication of an investment in equality, family and freedom. Not only limited to appliances, Nixon also stressed American’s high rate of homeownership as a sign of U.S. egalitarianism and, as such, intimated that the building boom of the postwar years – in the form of suburban tract development – had, as May comments, “offered a piece of the American dream for everyone.”⁸⁴ As Griswold states, “The real race [against the Soviet Union]...was not the arms race or the space race but the consumer race.”⁸⁵ Nixon’s speech buttressed the perception that being middle class and having your own suburban home, replete with the latest in consumer electronics, was the most American way of life while promoting a vision of social upward mobility and the eventual, or at least possible, prosperity of all Americans.⁸⁶

Moreover, through being able to afford certain consumer goods emblematic of status, men could display their success through the purchases of their various dependents. Consequently, the nature of breadwinning was changing to include a different conception of value and, with the limited possibility of being a Heroic Artisan (that is to say a self-employed producer), a different modality for grounding a masculine identity. Moreover, the ‘50s saw a proliferation of a youth culture in the baby boomer generation, which Madison Avenue promptly inundated with advertising through the ever more ubiquitous television sets. Rife with commercial products such as records, cosmetics, clothes and cars, the youth culture influenced children and adolescents in the ‘50s demands and, to be good breadwinning fathers, men had to oblige to the increasing “needs” of their dependents. Hence, as the importance of being able to provide increased so did the temptation to give into working instead spending the evening with the family.⁸⁷

This is not to say that the establishment of “consumerism” was a sudden occurrence in the postwar years. Coontz proposes that the process towards reconceptualizing “consuming” as wasteful, deleterious and destructive to considering it as “a positive way to the satisfying of

⁸⁴ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 20

⁸⁵ Katz, “Passive Resistance; Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, p. 197

⁸⁶ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 165

⁸⁷ Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, p. 197

human needs and desires” was to a large degree completed by the 1920s.⁸⁸ Moreover, according to masculinity scholar, Tom Pendergast, the white-collar man was not only working to provide commodities for his family. Mainstream “men’s magazines” like *True* and *Argosy* – the “*Esquire* for the everyman – had been adjusting the American man’s attitudes towards a “modern masculinity” for well over a decade already by promoting the consumption of clothes, hunting gear and smoking pipes.

Since around the mid 1940s these two magazines had been creating a space where, amidst stories brave soldiers and extraordinary adventures, men could engage in dreams of consuming without feeling any less masculine.⁸⁹ The magazine had white-collar men and skilled laborers – as Pendergast notes, a demographic not used to conspicuous consumption – as its principal readership. *True* and *Argosy*’s advertisements were often oriented towards what middle-class men liked, or would have liked, to do in their free time: hunt, fish, drink beer and play poker. However, quite deftly, *True* magazine managed to link consumer choice with Americanism and freedom from the oppression seen in totalitarian regimes by telling its male readership that buying a tie with an eccentric pattern or unusual color, and the fact that there were such ties out there on the market, was proof of the freedom and tolerance in the U.S.

Fatherhood as Masculinity: Conflict

That domestic masculinity necessitated a new emphasis on fatherhood did not preclude the breadwinner ethic and proved compatible with a redefinition of masculinity to deemphasize the workplace as a site where men should draw their identity – although being gainfully employed was still very much a part of masculinity. Talcott Parsons’s framework of personality development posited that men became, as a result of being pushed into “psychological independence” earlier than women, emotionally stunted and more concerned for their own satisfaction than others’. Seeing this as a problematic situation for men, Parsons urged men to participate in child-rearing and share their emotions in order to better their interpersonal skills.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, p. 170

⁸⁹ Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000) p. 224

⁹⁰ Ian Craib, *The Importance of Disappointment*. (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 137

Nonetheless, the dominant discourse was not without internal contradictions for the male subject in the '50s. The fragmentation of masculinity into public and private meant that some men were constituted as now having a double "burden": to be successful providers and attentive fathers. Hence, the mid-century discourse on the fatherhood can be seen as premised, on the one hand, the model of the Genteel Patriarch and, on the other hand, Marketplace Manhood.⁹¹ However, these ideal types, Kimmel suggests, were historically, and in terms of enactment, at odds with each other as the latter was "an absentee landlord at home and an absent father with his children" who considered success at work as the only true barometer of masculinity, and the former was, because of his inherited affluence, a devoted and doting father.⁹² However, it seemed that in the '50s, American men needed to find a middle ground between these two models to be considered "mature."

However, with the "de-classing" of America it seemed the everyman could dote in his newfound leisure; as an element which contributed to fostering well-adjusted American citizens. However, the adoption of this disposition was problematic because, according to a journalist at the time, the American father was confused because he had "children whom he [could] never decide whether to indulge or discipline."⁹³ Thus, Griswold proffers that the demands placed on men as fathers – by both themselves and others – were, on the one hand, to be unconcerned with the affairs of the home and focus on his work. This sentiment is expressed in a popular science article from the mid '50s, which explains:

Since the male's primary function is simply to impregnate he can feel somewhat detached from the result; yet one of the significant ways in which male humans differ from, say, male monkeys is that male humans in every society provide for their females and their young. To be a man, therefore, carries with it...the idea of responsibility.⁹⁴

On the other hand, other sources of professional advice, such as O. Spurgeon English and Constance J. Foster's book *Fathers Are Parents Too* (1951) urged that men show "friendliness, respect" and "understanding" when relating to their children.⁹⁵ In many cases, men chose the masculinity that had the strongest anchoring in history: Marketplace Manhood and its pursuit of

⁹¹ Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia," p. 123

⁹² Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia," p. 123

⁹³ Ernst Havemann, "The Age of Psychology in the U.S." *Life*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Jan., 1957) p. 77

⁹⁴ Coughlan, "Changing Roles in Modern Marriage," p. 109

⁹⁵ Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, p.201

status and power in the public sphere.⁹⁶ However, it was the suggestion that masculinity was predicated on a balance between involvements at home and at work, and that masculinity was secure even when men had become consumers of commodities (none of Kimmel's masculinity types included consuming as desirable behavior for a man), which made it vulnerable to the discursive countermoves we will examine in the next chapter

Chapter Conclusion

The long '50s was a period that in some ways was quite expansive considering that the dominant discourse on masculinity contained such a strong emphasis on domestic fatherhood instead of positing it as a small but requisite part of manhood. Hence, the strident man of the marketplace seemed to be diminishing as an admirable enactment of masculinity as the economic boom and the growth of the middle class allowed an increasing number of, especially, white men a chance to relax and participate in raising their in children.

What is more, instead of being a cold-hearted competitor, the therapeutic professions saw a quelling of the male acquisitiveness as indications of mental maturity and health. The myth of classlessness and an emphasis on adjustment and maturity offered acceptable ways for him to participate in the white-collar workplace without having to feel like less than a man. As the U.S. transitioned from manufacture, material production, and small businesses to jobs increasingly performed in a corporate setting, many felt that this type of work take its toll on their sense of masculinity. Hence, with a burgeoning consumer economy fueled by commodity acquisition a new way to measure success along the parameters of the still-popular breadwinner conception of men emerged. Furthermore, this new way of consciously displaying wealth had its cost; a cost that pulled many fathers away from the home and into the office for long nights of overtime work.

However, for the dominant discourse's suggestion that men participate as nurturers within the nuclear family, this conversely entailed a condemnation of men who chose to organize their lives differently. Notwithstanding the many admonitions to absent fathers who through their irresponsibility still embraced the old ways of being a man and thus risked having their children become sissies, homosexuals or fascists, the man who had no family at all was the most suspect

⁹⁶ Griswold, "Fatherhood," p. 164

and most certainly mentally and morally corrupt. Additionally, the atmosphere of progressiveness did not have a correlate in the role of women. The dominant discourse demarcated that, for her, domesticity was the only sphere in which she would find fulfillment as an individual. She was to be in the home as the principal caretaker for the children and, as the market for cheap maids was waning and the market for household appliances rising, a cook and a cleaner – in addition to being a wanton wench for her perpetually randy husband.

Chapter 3:

Invasion of the Body Snatchers, Conformity and Individualism

Film scholar Peter Biskind suggests that *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* depiction surreptitious collectivization indicates that it might be an allegory of communist infiltration. Furthermore, he argues that as the emotionless alien invaders (or, as they grow out of seedpods, “pod people”), with their increasing numbers, aim to construct a “mechanistic utopia” of communist rationality.⁹⁷ However, many of the postwar/Cold War invasion narratives so popular in the 1950s (*War of the Worlds* [1951], *The Thing from another World* [1951] and *Invaders from Mars* [1953]) can represent anything from anxieties about communist influence or the fear of McCarthyism, to the apprehension of individuality diminishing in the “little boxes” of suburbia.⁹⁸ Katrina Mann suggests a third interpretation where *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* had the effect of uniting the presumably white audience in identifying with “suburban whiteness besieged by outsiders who force a new and foreign version of ‘mongrelized’ homogeneity on a suburban town,” and forcing an “identity shift” on the film’s “mythic white Americans by ‘foreign’ invaders.”⁹⁹ Although Mann’s interpretation is quite fascinating in considering *Body Snatchers* as an instance of displaced racial anxieties (especially considering the racial tensions of the decade), pursuing it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this text.

Thus, we will consider *Body Snatchers* as presenting an invasion of the body through the mind rather than an invasion of alien bodies. As such, it is debatable if the threat is communist infiltration; the homogenizing strict social and political sanctions which is supposed to work as a bulwark *against* communism; or the dangers of affluence and mass consumerism. Nonetheless, Rogin proposes that *Body Snatchers*’ director, Don Siegel, was self-consciously trying to project the claustrophobic environment that coerced opinion under the whistle-blowing regime during

⁹⁷ Michael A. Katovich and Patrick T. Kinkade, “The Stories Told in Science Fiction and Social Science: Reading ‘The Thing’ and Other Remakes from Two Eras.” *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Nov., 1993) p. 622
Biskind, *Seeing is Believing*, p.140, 141

⁹⁸ Christopher Lockett, “Domesticity as Redemption in ‘The Puppet Masters’: Robert A. Heinlein’s Model for Consensus.” *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Mar., 2007) p. 46

⁹⁹ Katrina Mann, “‘You’re Next!’: Postwar Hegemony Besieged in ‘Invasion of the Body Snatchers.’” *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Autumn, 2004) p.52 pp. 49-68

the anti-communist witch-hunts of the '50s.¹⁰⁰ More to the point, if we read *Body Snatchers* according to authorial intent it presents a scenario reflecting the anxieties brought on by the reaction against the Red menace that manifested itself as McCarthyism's "ethos of political conformity" and "Eisenhower-era suburban culture" as connected forces that propagated consensus and normalization.¹⁰¹

Plot summary of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*:

Invasion of the Body Snatchers starts with Dr. Miles Bennell M.D. (Kevin McCarthy) recounting to a psychiatrist what has happened to him over the last few days. Miles has come home to the sleepy town of Santa Mira after a medical conference whereupon he is alerted to a spate of patients feeling as if members of their closest family are somehow not who they seem to be. Miles is visited by his old flame, Becky Driscoll (Dana Wynter). Becky explains that her cousin thinks that one of her family members is an impostor too. However, upon further investigation Miles concludes that nothing is amiss and recommends that Becky's cousin see a psychiatrist. Becky and Miles go on a date that is cut short by him responding to a call made by Jack (King Donovan) and Teddy Belicec (Carolyn Jones). At Jack and Teddy's they are shown an incompletely molded human figure which is starting to resemble Jack.

The next day, Miles notices that people are feeling at ease with the people they earlier insisted were frauds. Then, Miles discovers that there are huge seed pods containing replicas of Jack, Teddy, Becky and himself growing in his greenhouse. In panic, Miles tries to flee Santa Mira with Becky. Miles discovers seedpods in his trunk, after which Miles and Becky seek refuge in his clinic. They must stay awake using any means necessary as the pods supplant their human counterparts when they are asleep. When morning comes, the replicas are distributing seed pods to be transported to nearby towns and cities. Shortly thereafter, they are confronted by pod-people versions of Dan Kaufmann (Larry Gates), the town psychiatrist, Jack and a police officer. The pod people explain that they are emotionless aliens from outer space intent on replacing all humans. Luckily they escape. However, Becky ruins their plan when she reveals emotion. This alerts the pod people, and Miles and Becky evade them by hiding in an abandoned

¹⁰⁰ Michael Rogin, "Kiss Me Deadly: Communism, Motherhood, and Cold War Movies." *Representations*, Vol.1, No. 6 (Spring, 1984) p. 29

¹⁰¹ Lockett, "Domesticity as Redemption in 'The Puppet Masters', p. 46

mine. Next, Miles decides to try to find help. However, when he returns he discovers that Becky is falling asleep. He tries, unsuccessfully, to keep her awake. When she awakens, Miles discovers that she has been replaced by a pod person. Having left pod Becky behind he is desperate. Miles walks along the highway shouting to drivers to get them to stop. After seeing a truck loaded with pods headed towards Los Angeles he starts running and screaming, “They’re already here! You’re next!” Then we are back where we started with Miles talking to the psychiatrist about the invasion that is taking place with the federal authorities having been alerted.

Masculinity and Conformity

The overriding fear reflected in *Body Snatchers* is *conformity* or its opposite, the loss of individuality (or as sociologist David Riesman would have it, *autonomy*). We will return to discussing the film in the context of suburbia below. First, however, we will take a cursory look at which forces the critics who feared conformity indicted for the change in men’s mentality and the variant of masculinity they believed this conformity oppressed as well as the type of man they believed conformity created.

The social criticism discussed below took issue with how the value of the free, independent and creative spirit was undermined as an unfortunate byproduct of the U.S.’s own institutions and the shift from a society of producers to a consumer-driven “centralized and bureaucratized society”, rather than how communism, or the fear of its influence, is stifling American men.¹⁰² One such structural change is the ascendance of a “suburban culture” which, according to urbanist William H. Whyte, was an extension of the “managerial ideology” of imposing sameness on unique individuals.¹⁰³ May concludes, “they [Riesman, Whyte and other “critical observers of the middle class”] perceived that suburban homes and consumer goods offered material compensations of organized work life.”¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, I would claim that in the discourse of these “critical observers” the issues of occupational boredom and dissatisfaction with consumerism were tacitly informed by mourning the passing of the self-made man. In commenting on consuming in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1957, Herbert Gold, although much more

¹⁰² David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950) p. 18

¹⁰³ William Whyte, *The Organization Man*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) p. 44

¹⁰⁴ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 22

to the left of Riesman and Whyte, stated: “We can create ourselves in our own image. And what is our own image? The buttery face in the Pond's [cosmetics] advertisement, the epicene face in the Marlboro publicity.”¹⁰⁵ Gold’s statement on “creating” was not made in admiration; it reflected that the view that his ideal of self-made man was not composed of the homogenizing and feminizing consumerist impulses catered to by the advertising industry.

According to Whyte and Riesman the development which Gold remarked upon was part of the reason why the U.S. was witnessing the end times of a masculine ideal of activity, independence and material transformation. To them it seemed that these qualities became impossible to realize or sustain in a society where consumption and the managerial corporate structure influenced public and private life.¹⁰⁶ “Conformity”, as Ehrenreich notes, became the code word for male discontent”.¹⁰⁷ This discourse on conformity was not kind towards the ideal of the cooperative and “adjusted” man they saw as the preferred disposition at the time. Thus, in commenting on white-collar men’s lack of ambition and achievement, sociologist C. Wright Mills observed, “The twentieth-century white-collar man is always somebody’s man, the corporation’s, the government’s, the army’s; and he is seen as the man who does not rise.”¹⁰⁸

By the mid ’50s the number of Americans employed in white-collar jobs had outstripped those employed in manufacturing and which meant that the critique of the middle-class life continued unabated throughout the decade.¹⁰⁹ As Ian Nicholson observes, by the mid-‘50s, when *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was released, there was an identifiable “discourse of national decline” – which actually signified a perception that something was wrong with masculinity – “that centered on the idea that American culture was losing its ability to produce autonomous, strong-willed individuals.”¹¹⁰

Masculinity, the Middle Class and Cultural Stagnation

The critical discourse on middle-class men’s conformity suggested the primacy of the type of work men performed and any other identity as secondary. They posited the generic, white

¹⁰⁵ Herbert Gold, “The Age of Happy Problems.” *The Age of Happy Problems* (New York: The Dial Press, 1962) p. 6

¹⁰⁶ Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, p. 242

¹⁰⁷ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 30

¹⁰⁸ C. Wright Mills in Fraterrigo, p. 28

¹⁰⁹ Katz, “Passive Resistance.”

¹¹⁰ Nicholson, “‘Shocking’ Masculinity,” p. 246

male as simultaneously emasculated, subdued and anxious since his authentic masculine essence, rooted in the qualitative aspects of his life, was being suppressed. This was happening with the tedium and meaninglessness of “white-collar office work” and in the “emptiness of modern suburbia.”¹¹¹ Illustrating the cultural pessimism with which the postwar U.S. was sometimes viewed, a popular science article from the mid-50s uses an anecdote about a mental patient who escaped from a psychiatric institution. A year and a half later, the escapee was found living in the wilderness in a significantly better frame of mind than when he had been institutionalized. Consequently, the author of the article muses on the curative effect this state of nature had on him; producing his own tools for hunting and logging. The author had to wonder if something was wrong with society when a man of such resourcefulness could not fit in.¹¹²

This discourse on the conformity of men brought with it a tacit acceptance of the presumptions of “classlessness” mentioned in the previous chapter; taking onboard the suggestion that, in the ‘50s, U.S. society’s progression towards modernization and economic development were complete. Similarly, the forecast for poverty and hunger was swift eradication.¹¹³ However, common to critics such as Mills, Riesman and Whyte was their socio-cultural analysis that, while privileging the heterosexual, white male as an object of inquiry, suggested that the middle class was in danger of breeding a character type that did not embody or cherish individuality, and was ultimately bereft of masculinity.¹¹⁴ A reason for this was the exploitation of the Marketplace Manhood that had gradually turned from a virtuous enactment of masculinity to indicative of an effeminate supplicant.

In part, their focus on men’s changing personality, and by extension masculinity, is evidence of a critique that could not see the rise of the leisure class or corporate hegemony as anything other than inevitable. Thus, as they represented discourses which posited that that middle-class Americans were under the tyranny of mass phenomena – such as residential homogenization, the postwar labor market, the media and the personality engineering of human relations experts – which were threatening to rob men of “adventurousness, personal accomplishment, and innovation” they did not follow their arguments to their logical conclusion and suggest alternative ways of structuring the economy or society (although, this was not

¹¹¹ Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, p.185, 186

¹¹² Havemann, “The Age of Psychology in the U.S.” p.78

¹¹³ Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, p. 186

¹¹⁴ Katz, “Passive Resistance.”

equally true for C. Wright Mills). Rather, they focused on the ability of American men to retain a “self-critical core identity”¹¹⁵

Hence, they made sure not to be politically out of bounds as they in the same breath lauded the American values of fidelity and cooperation while suggesting that this mentality was being exploited to produce conformity in the corporation.¹¹⁶ Consequently, neither Riesman nor Whyte was politically radical and, thus, their project was, in some ways not, wholly divorced from the agents of rationalization mentioned in the previous chapter. Similarly, they wanted the modern man to adjust in order function in today’s organization society. However, they believed that ultimately their prescriptions for men would change the culture of the organization and the “managerial economy” and free men from having to mask their competitive instincts behind a façade of agreeableness that was causing the “psychological, moral and cultural tensions plaguing the middle class.”¹¹⁷

It should not be underestimated that contributions to this discourse were articulated by men, educated in the humanities or social sciences, who took on roles as public intellectuals; hence, this critique in many cases followed the logic of class distinctions in terms of cultural capital. In many ways, this discourse is articulated from Morbius’s vantage point. In a sense, the allegedly childish intellectual returns in this chapter to defend himself and speak his piece about what is wrong with the culture Adams and his crew represent, while urging men like Miles Bennell to run from the dull embrace of suburbia before he is consumed.

Social Criticism and Its Masculinities

Riesman commented that ideal situation for men, that is to say, where their masculinity would thrive, was to be found in “the artist, of whatever sort and for whom there is no real division between work and play, indicates what may someday be possible”. On this premise, he submitted that when work and leisure are more integrated to cater to men’s “inventiveness”, a

¹¹⁵ Lockett, “Domesticity as Redemption in ‘The Puppet Masters’”, p. 48
Katz, “Passive Resistance.”

¹¹⁶ Erika Kuhlman, “Individualism.” *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Bret E. Carroll (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2003) p. 230

¹¹⁷ David Riesman, “The Suburban Dislocation.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 314 (Nov., 1957) p. 126
Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, p. 242

position that sounds remarkably close to the revival of the Heroic Artisan, men could be truly autonomous.¹¹⁸

Apropos art, liberal critics such as Clement Greenberg, Daniel Bell and Paul Goodman believed that art was increasingly marginalized with the ascendance of “vulgar” and “effeminate” mass forms of entertainment – not to mention, the pitied “middle brow” – and the dominance of a simplistic utilitarian ethic. Rather, they endorsed that men should act in accord with their authentic individuality and that mass media would lose out once monotonous culture of work had been reformed.¹¹⁹ Hence, many of the critics of the middle class based their ideal masculinity on the precepts “high culture” for its supposed expression of individuality, advancing the “artist” as the apex of manhood.

Riesman suggested that the style of work and domesticity in the postwar U.S. produced a particular type of psychological subject. In his monograph *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) he argues that America’s culture in leisure, at work and through mass consumption creates a middle class largely composed of “other-directed” personalities whose “*contemporaries are the source of direction*” and that the other-directed man’s greatest asset lay in “marketing his personality”.¹²⁰ Furthermore, he posits that this character type “permits a close behavioral conformity...through an exceptional sensitivity to the actions and wishes of others.”¹²¹ In contrast to Spock’s advice on child rearing, Pells notes how Riesman plaintively described the child who was taught to be other-directed as valuing “popularity” over intellectual pursuits.

Moreover, Riesman contrasted this new disposition with the older “inner-directedness” – which he did not explicitly endorse but nonetheless clearly preferred over the former – whose industrial propensity hearkened to another age where aggression, competition and uncertainty were the premises of the marketplace and, implicitly, factors that allowed an undiluted expression of masculinity.¹²² Daniel Horowitz puts it this way:

In the inner-directed stage, the age of production characteristic of Western bourgeois societies from the Renaissance to the late nineteenth century, parents emphasized character as they taught children to internalize authority. The result was self-reliant, driven, and highly individualistic entrepreneurs. What guided them, in Riesman’s

¹¹⁸ Riesman, “The Suburban Dislocation”, p. 144

¹¹⁹ Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, p. 222

¹²⁰ Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, p. 242

¹²¹ Cuordileone, “Politics in an Age of Anxiety”, p. 523; Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, p. 22

¹²² Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, p. 242; Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia”, p.124

memorable analogy that drew on his job at Sperry, was the gyroscope, an internalized mechanism that kept individuals focused on work in a production-oriented economy.¹²³

William Whyte was wary of the ideologically dominant organization man whom he saw as embodying the “Social Ethic”, which he stated “that with reason...could be called an organization ethic, or a bureaucratic ethic”.¹²⁴ However, he did not claim that this ethic was limited to the organization, but prevailed in anyone who exhibited a preference for technique over content, “a belief in ‘belongingness’ – that is to say, a “total integration with the group” – as the ultimate need of the individual” and the use of social engineering to achieve “belongingness”.¹²⁵ What especially irked Whyte was the tendency by human relations experts to downplay the inherent – and ultimately beneficial – friction between man and the community and instead rename it “misunderstandings.”

This ethic of “public agreement” and “psychological adjustment” had supplanted the Protestant Ethic that had put stock in the individual’s capacity for dissent and a recognition that when the community was being challenged the results were often to the benefit of society.¹²⁶ Furthermore, he argued that the Protestant Ethic was predicated on “hard work, thrift and competitive struggle”. Whyte observed that Americans – even the organization man – still considered the Protestant Ethic to be imperative to realizing the American Dream. However, he lamented that, ultimately, few men, particularly the organization man himself, embodied this ethic any more.¹²⁷ Whyte plaintively related how the cohort of young men that were now coming through the universities knew the Protestant Ethic, but that they were untroubled by the ideal of self-reliance. Whyte notes that while his generation had labored under the misapprehension that self-sufficiency was still a possibility; the young bucks entering adulthood now had accepted that the Protestant Ethic and the American Dream was not relevant to them and that their success rested on their adherence to Social Ethic.

Also commenting on the way society was responding to a period where the economy was booming and raising the material standard of living for countless people was psychologist Eric Fromm – a major influence for Riesman. Fromm posited that this economic success had a tragic

¹²³ Daniel Horowitz, “David Riesman: From Law to Social Criticism.” *Buffalo Law Review*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (2010) p. 1013

¹²⁴ Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 6

¹²⁵ Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 7, 82

¹²⁶ Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 195

¹²⁷ Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 4

counterpart in American men's incessant quest for social acceptance. From this, Fromm put forward that Americans, through their compulsion of wanting to meet or exceed other people's expectations of what a man should garner of accolades and material wealth, had acquired, what seemed to him to be, a novel and disquieting perspective on the relation between themselves and society called the "market orientation".

To clarify, my assumption that these critics of suburbia and the organization were only ostensibly talking about these developments' effects on a non-specified personality or persons possessing an "ethic", while in truth only commenting on men's character and dispositions is based on observations made by other scholars. James Gilbert has observed that the analysis of the U.S.'s turn to the Social Ethic and other-directedness proceeded along a logic of gender which posited "man" as fundamental and illustrative and "female" as indicative of frivolity and triviality.¹²⁸ In the case of Whyte's bias, little is concealed as he is writing about the organization *man*. However, Cuordileone notes in an author and scholar such as David Riesman an awkward usage of gender-neutral pronouns that only barely masks the fact that he is referring to men as the only victims of the decreasing autonomy of people in America.¹²⁹ Ehrenreich goes further still and posits that Riesman's concept of "other-direction" was recognizable as feminine to anyone who at the time of its popularity had a basic knowledge of sociological and psychological theory. Thus, she suggests that an "inner-directed woman" is a redundant phrase because characteristics such as pliancy and non-competitiveness are effectively what Talcott Parsons and Freud had already defined as feminine.¹³⁰

The Suburban Setting and Conformity

Enabled by the astounding growth of the U.S. economy in the wake of WWII, suburban living provided reasonably spacious and affordable homes away from the congested urban centers for the burgeoning middle-class. Suburbia's rapid expansion in the postwar era came about because of pent-up demand for housing, government subsidies, changes in mortgage

¹²⁸ James Gilbert in Nicholson, "'Shocking' Masculinity," p. 245

¹²⁹ Cuordileone, "Politics in an Age of Anxiety," p. 523

¹³⁰ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 34

policies and the resulting building boom.¹³¹ Throughout the '50s suburbia came to be represented in popular culture as a “modest vision of utopia” (as in the TV series *Leave It to Beaver*, 1957–1963 and *Ozzie and Harriet*).¹³² Furthermore, from the close of WWII to 1960 approximately 85 percent of the new homes that were built were in suburban areas.¹³³ However, the residential expansion into the hinterlands around urban centers was not new to the postwar era as this development had started already in the mid-19th century and witnessed a significant increase in the 1920s, although this expansion came to a grinding halt due to the Great Depression and WWII.¹³⁴ Subsequently, the speed and intensity with which suburban housing was developed in the late '40s and '50s far surpassed previous eras.

Nevertheless, as Vaughan, Griffiths, Haklay and Jones note, there were several postwar commentators on the status of American society, such as the aforementioned Whyte and Riesman who took a dystopian view of suburbia.¹³⁵ This pessimistic perspective is expressed in *Body Snatchers* as the intrepid Dr. Miles Bennell is pitted against a whole town of body snatchers that are invading earth to convert mankind to we might call “Podism”. This mentality promises that, in the words of pod-psychiatrist Dan Kaufmann, “Love, desire, ambition, faith - without them, life's so simple, believe me”. Thus, *Body Snatchers* makes the point of a dangerous suburban *culture* (in both senses of the word) in the scene where we witness Bennell finding the alien's pods growing in his greenhouse. The conjunction of these aliens and the town suggests that although the body snatchers are of alien origin, they grow out of Santa Mira's soil, thus, strengthening the interpretation that the spreading conformity is not attributable to an external force, it is literally homegrown.

The insidious thing that happens in Santa Mira, and was perceived as occurring in suburbs across America, was not an effect of physical coercion, but rather an insinuating force which arose in the interplay among the various people that live there and the fact that, spatially, the suburb was fairly isolated. It was believed that contributing to the conformity of mind witnessed in suburbanites' behavior was the uniform architecture in these residential areas. For

¹³¹ Laura J. Miller, “Family Togetherness and the Suburban Ideal.” *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1995) p. 401

¹³² Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, p. 25

¹³³ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, p. 24

¹³⁴ Miller, “Family Togetherness and the Suburban Ideal,” p. 401

¹³⁵ Laura Vaughan, Sam Griffiths, Mordechai Haklay, Catherine Emma Jones, “Do the Suburbs Exist? Discovering Complexity and Specificity in Suburban Built Form.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Oct., 2009) p. 482

commentators such as Riesman and John Keats, who considered the psychological effects of social and material structures, such sameness in people's domiciles meant a diminished sense of self while fostering an illusory sense of belonging. These surreptitious influences were difficult to spot beneath the spotless veneer of these places that were, according to a contributor to *Dissent*, "nobody's hometown."¹³⁶

In this regard, the manner in which the pod people stealthily transmit themselves into bodies provides an illustration of a conformity that transformed people into followers. To use another example from popular culture for comparison, in *The Thing from Another World* (1951) the alien is forceful physical presence and a wholly Other being which is out to drink human blood. Instead, the pod people rely on a mental "weakness" of human beings – their need for sleep –, which can be interpreted as a metaphor for mankind's inherent wish to participate in a community, sometimes to the detriment of their individuality. As ever more people in Santa Mira are replaced and joined in a hive-like harmony of thought, the occurs "creeping normalcy" of conformity. For Miles Bennell, who wants to remain an autonomous individual, this means that the once "secure and familiar" inhabitants of the town "are twisted into something subtly dangerous and slyly perverted." Concurrently, while for those who have been body snatched, Santa Mira, as Riesman comments about the changes in the American family but could very well apply to a community, "continuously absorbs the strange and reshapes itself, so the strange becomes familiar."¹³⁷

In *Body Snatchers*, a woman struggles to formulate the change she has noticed in her pod father: "Memories or not; there is no feeling!"(0:20:50) This recalls one of John Keats's most acerbic attacks on suburbia. Citing sociologist Harold Mendelsohn, Keats notes how in the suburbs all that exists between people are relationships of instrumentality. The suburbs' lack of emotional ties resonates with how the body snatchers relate to one another; as they are without emotion how they can only interact with each other in terms of services they can provide for one another, performed to maintain the system of which they are constituent parts. The individualist critics did not have a large vocabulary for family, but it seems that this element enters the discussion of suburbia in Keats' s observation on the way suburbanites relate to one another. Both Keats and Riesman long for times when the family was a well-defined social unit instead of

¹³⁶ Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, p.191

¹³⁷ Sobchack, *Screening Space: the American Science Fiction Film*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987) p. 124; Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, p. 25

being, as Riesman noted about families in the '50s, a social entity ostensibly continuous with the wider social environment. According to Riesman, this stems from the other-directed person's capacity to be "at home everywhere and nowhere" in virtue of his capacity for sociability. However, Riesman did not want the permissive atmosphere of the family where children were "loved up" rather than "brought up" but rather that the father raised his son through making demands and "character training" towards self-discipline.¹³⁸

For Riesman and Whyte it was not the absence of emotion that made the suburb so pernicious, but rather that, with other-directed personalities being legion, all feelings tended towards consensus. Thus, the relatively close proximity of strangers in suburbia and the relative distance from other communities meant that one was beholden to the values and behaviors of one's neighbors. Additionally, Whyte mentions that suburbanites are rootless by not being bound together by kinship or shared regional identities but had merely moved there as a result of having roughly the same economic profile. Furthermore, Frankie V. Adams suggests, in a comment which commends Keats's *The Crack in the Picture Window* (1956), that there is an original homogeneity in suburbs due to the similar socioeconomic backgrounds of the people moving there.¹³⁹ On this background, Riesman put to suburbia that it is a place where "like-mindedness reverberates upon itself".¹⁴⁰

Suburbia, Feminization and Consumption

Nevertheless, as we approach the film as an allegory of indigenous conformity and Santa Mira as a site of suburban culture we need to be cognizant of the gendered subtext of the movie as well as the attendant public discourses on conformity and its symbolic link with femininity. Peter Filene suggests that the dominant message to men in the '50s was that professional toughness was to be weighed against the right measure of domesticity, this discourse also considered that men were having a hard time figuring out how to strike the right balance, while pundits warned against the imminent dangers to masculinity were men to succumb to the ease of

¹³⁸ Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, p. 42

¹³⁹ Frankie V. Adams, "The Community-Wide Stake of Citizens in Urban Renewal." *The Phylon Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1st Qtr., 1958) p. 95

¹⁴⁰ Riesman, "The Suburban Dislocation," p. 133

suburbia.¹⁴¹ is no coincidence that Miles is the counterpoint to the increasingly drab masses in the film. With its uniformity and regularity coded feminine, suburbia symbolized a certain receptivity and passivity in opposition to the masculine ideals of vitality and spontaneity; with the growth of the “bland” and predictable space it was feared that most men would eventually succumb to the scourge of comfort and uniformity in a less-than-masculine existence.¹⁴²

Although underpinned by the statistical fact of the majority of the “gender of the daytime population,” Susan Saegert notes that suburbia has been, and still is, symbolically represented as feminine space of safety, domesticity, relaxation and frivolity opposite the “serious” and “powerful” masculine world of the urban center.¹⁴³ Moreover, as Catano notes, myth of the self-made man, which here figures as an inner-directed, turn-of-the-century Marketplace Masculinity holds an appeal that “encourages departure from the realm of the feminine, with its daily interpersonal concerns, and a subsequent movement into the mythical realm of individual and corporate battle.”¹⁴⁴

Furthermore, Coontz outlines in broad strokes the historical development of intelligible public and private spheres and their gender coding and entailments. From the Enlightenment, western societies witnessed the growth of a system of contractual law in the areas of politics, economics and jurisprudence that was predicated on male individuals entering into binding agreements on an equal footing with inherent and independent rights. This system excluded grating the same inalienable rights to women and the family and, therefore developed into a non-codified sphere of interpersonal relationships based on emotions, dependence and concern for others. “For men, however, dependency” and, as a consequence, domesticity, as Coontz observes, “became a negative, disgraceful quality in public”.¹⁴⁵

Whereas Riesman granted that it might be the opposite of strict conformity, namely the abundance of leisure time and a dearth of leisure activities ensured by a booming economy, that was causing people to resort to facile forms of pleasure through mass “consumership” in the

¹⁴¹ Peter Filene, “‘Cold War Culture’ Doesn’t Say It All.” *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, eds. Peter J. Kuzinick and James Gilbert. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001) p. 162

¹⁴² Witness the continued onslaught of masculinist anti-suburban sentiment in movies such as *American Beauty* (1999) and the depiction of suburbia as the crucible of feminine vapidty in the TV series *Desperate Housewives* (2004–present) and *Suburgatory* (2011) both on ABC

¹⁴³ Susan Saegert, “Masculine Cities and Feminine Suburbs: Polarized Ideas, Contradictory Realities.” *Signs*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Supplement. Women and the American City (Spring, 1980) p. 97

¹⁴⁴ James V. Catano, “The Rhetoric of Masculinity: Origins, Institutions, and the Myth of the Self-Made Man.” *College English*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Apr., 1990) p. 426

¹⁴⁵ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, p. 44

suburbs, Whyte was convinced that there were internal pressures to conform that arose out of the American man's Social Ethic and his desire for "belongingness".¹⁴⁶ He considered that the suburb was intended to sate this desire for community but instead it functioned as an extension of the marketplace where conformity in purchasing commodities was analogous to conformity of opinion at work. In *The Organization Man* Whyte was not as circumspect as Riesman in gender determination when he posited that suburban living animated consumption towards inevitable conformity:

[W]hen only a few housewives on the block have, say, an automatic dryer, the word-of-mouth praise of its indispensability is restricted. But then, as time goes on and the adjacent housewives follow suit, in a mounting ratio others are exposed to more and more talk about its benefits. Soon the nonpossession of the item becomes an almost unsocial act – an unspoken aspersion of the others' judgment or taste.¹⁴⁷

Here, Whyte posits that it is women who drive consumption and, thus, the system of mass-produced commodities. In fact, as the market for consumer durables, especially household appliances, exploded in the '50s, advertisers, despite surveys indicating that men controlled the family economy, tried to tailor their promotional campaigns to fit the tastes of women.¹⁴⁸

Riesman proffered that the conditions of an ersatz spaciousness has lured men into "willing to become domesticated" by providing them with the opportunity to tame the "wilderness" when riding their motor-powered lawnmowers with which, as he notes with obvious pity, they cut the grass on their "handkerchief-sized lawns" as well as, in a facile attempt to assert distinctiveness, play loud music through their stereos.¹⁴⁹ Riesman did have a critical edge against mass consumption; although we should heed Horowitz's suggestion that he did not believe that consuming beyond basic needs was *inherently* bad. Nonetheless, in the quote above Riesman is ridiculing the insignificant tasks of the male suburbanite and his ensnarement by conspicuous consumption, both of which enable the man to think he is free and unique. Moreover, it is clear that he thought indoctrinating men in the ways of "consumership" contributed to the formation of other-directed personalities as he notes, "the inner-directed man could concern himself with the product without himself being a good consumer."¹⁵⁰ Riesman claims that what happens in any

¹⁴⁶ Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, p. 357; Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 45

¹⁴⁷ Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 314

¹⁴⁸ Nickles, "Mass Consumption, Gender, and Class Identity in Postwar America," p. 588

¹⁴⁹ Riesman, "The Suburban Dislocation," p. 140

¹⁵⁰ Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, p. 112

generic suburb of the 1950's U.S is the "loss of human differentiation," that is to say that the male suburbanite misapprehends his situation, merely believing that he is acting idiosyncratically although every man around him is doing the same thing.¹⁵¹

In a more alarmist vein, historian Arthur Schlesinger articulated the gender anxiety that underwrote many of the opinions regarding the hazards of suburbia and the many fears these critics had for the effects of postwar affluence on American men. Consequently, he feared that as more men favored the trappings of domesticity the traditional division of gender roles had deteriorated and ushered in a time of "sexual ambiguity" in which the older masculine ethos of the breadwinner, which still held much sway, was being undermined by collectivization or, worse, feminization. This breadwinner ethos had emerged as a "masculine value system" during the 19th century in emphasizing men's public and productive roles along with an ethos of respectability and thrift.¹⁵² The suburb, conceptualized as spatially and economically prodigal, Riesman considered bereft of cultural variety, produced a different man such as Becky's uncle Ira; a man-vegetable that is complacent and compliant.

Moreover, Rogin, and Katovich and Kindkade suggest that the pod people community in *Body Snatchers* represents a threat to the nuclear family and, at that, especially the father.¹⁵³ However, as the former comments that the pod people's "vegetable" mode of asexual reproduction suggests that feminine "biology is out of control" *Body Snatchers* is not commenting on the endangerment of the social role of the father so much as the social distinction of being a "man" in its entirety. The film's vegetative motif is interesting insofar as it is a trenchant metaphor that illuminates the masculine essentialism of the anti-suburbanists.

Consequently, the film offers the further ramifications of the social critics' alarm over the sensual degradation that was happening to men in the suburbs where they are subjected and perhaps overcome by the mind-numbing feminine inclinations of consumerism and comfort. The suburban setting in *Body Snatchers*, once the pod people have multiplied, is devoid of sexual excitement; it is a filmic contrast to the city of the Noir "genre", where chiaroscuro figures of sumptuous and dangerous dames promise licentious masculine enticement and enactment. Thus, being that the pod people have no need for copulation, the male libido, the *sine qua non* of

¹⁵¹ Riesman, "The Suburban Dislocation," p. 134

¹⁵² Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon: Masculinity," p. 101

¹⁵³ Katovich and Kinkade, "The Stories Told in Science Fiction", p. 629; Rogin, "Kiss Me Deadly," p. 27

masculinity, loses all meaning within the scope of the pod people's society.¹⁵⁴ In the film's penultimate scene, when Miles kisses (pod) Becky and she asks that he join them, Becky is asking him to willingly submit to castration; there is no question of her wanting the phallus for herself, but to vanquish it altogether so that he may join her in the female (a moot qualifier when that is all there is) tranquility and passivity of the masses.

The Allied Threats to Masculinity

Miles becomes the champion of free and independent men in his fierce individualism by asserting his right dissent against the passive masses. If we wished to pursue a psychoanalytic reading, then we may interpret Miles penetrating his pod people captors with syringes as an image of his phallic superiority. Moreover, Miles resists assimilation and offers hope to men who are stuck in meaningless job and the docility of suburbia. Nonetheless, the fear of body snatching or masculinity snatching was not confined to the suburbs. The critique of the latter implied a society-wide indictment of both the public and private spheres. Like Bennell, who needs to stay awake and vigilant so that he is not supplanted by a drone, the white-collar worker in the Organization needed to be alert so that he did not become a "yes-man" who consistently conformed and consented.

The connection between suburban dysfunction and the organization has been made explicit for posterity through such works as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Richard Yates's novel *Revolutionary Road* (1961). However, in the '50s *Body Snatchers* drew on other popular texts on suburbia's emasculating effects. *Rebel without a Cause* (1955) established a symbolic connection between the two spheres of the organization man and the domesticated man via Frank Stark, the protagonist Jim Stark's father, and a "Caspar Milquetoast" if there ever was one. Frank is shown wearing a flowery apron over the gray flannel suit made famous by Sloan Wilson's novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (published in 1955 and subsequently made into a movie in 1956). In the novel, the ominous threat that the gray flannel hero, Tom Rath, defeats is the corporate workplace that produces the complacent executive supported by a throng of mid-level sycophants whose individualism is diminished for fear that voicing their opinions will cost them their job.

¹⁵⁴Rogin, "Kiss Me Deadly," p. 29

However, here it also suggested that the system of conformity extended beyond the workplace to include a critique of the mass media that has produced docility in the Rath couple's children. Thus, in *Rebel without a Cause* we have a sartorial linkage that not only evokes both the suit's iconic status as the uniform of the company man and the apron as the iconic garment of the housewife, but undermines the Organization Man's masculinity. Notwithstanding the film's nod to discourses on Momism popular in the '40s by showing Frank waiting on his domineering wife and, later, on his hands and knees cleaning up a spill, the effect of this juxtaposition of uniforms is to suggest that it is not enough to merely be a provider for the family, when the cost is that the mind of an organization man is emasculated to such a degree that he will, unlike Bennell, submit to anything, even castration (if only symbolically).

Beyond Santa Mira: The Organization

Writing about corporations during the '50s was par for the course as it set up a prescribed code of workplace advancement. This undercut the notion of the self-made version of masculinity, as it was coterminous with individuality. However, in order to achieve the trappings of success in the postwar decade it seemed that a completely new less-than-man had been created who was incapable of being confrontational and risk seeking. Nevertheless, for the few gray-suited Rathes who asserted their individuality there seemingly were many more who lost their way.

Whyte bemoaned the Organization in all its guises; whether as governmental bureaucracy or a large corporation.¹⁵⁵ In his writings, we see that the focus on "maturity" and "adjustment" from the previous chapter has been recast as forces of "manipulation" which aid the organization in scientifically managing its men to optimal "efficiency." Whyte maintained that through a focus on a "democratic atmosphere" and the giving emotional support to its employees the organization was able coax, rather than coerce, the gray flannel man into submission. Dan Kauffman, who we should remember was the first person to propose Miles join their passionless utopia, facilitates the invasion by insisting that nothing in Santa Mira is changing except for people's perception of the town and not the town itself. Kaufmann represents therapeutic *rationalizing* and assures Bennell that what is going on in Santa Mira is simply the case of

¹⁵⁵ Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, p. 233

collective anxiety giving way to “mass hysteria”. Consequently, Kaufmann obscures that there are actual, and dangerous, changes occurring in the town that are beyond the scope of a psychological explanation. Thus, *IBS* is loaded with a repudiation of the social engineering aspects of psychological practice – after all, Kaufmann wryly calls himself a “witch doctor” – noted by Whyte for its ability to pacify men.¹⁵⁶

As maintained by Whyte, the postwar years had fostered weakness in the middle class. Pells notes that Whyte and Riesman are equally skeptical about collectivist moorings of 1930s politics and see it as the origin of the social ethic and inner-directedness. Throughout Whyte and Riesman’s analysis there emerges an ideal of creative manhood, an admixture of the Heroic Artisan and an older version of Marketplace Manhood which they perceived to be lost in the marketplace of the ‘50s. Masculinity scholar James Catano calls the latter “the self-made man,” a figure with a mythological similarity to the masculinity that Cuordileone notes that the Wheaton College English professor, E. Merrill Root, wanted to “reanimate” in liberals. Consequently, this masculinity was predicated on an idea that men should “toughen up” and embody (as it was presumed that men wanted to) “rugged, hard and individualistic values”.¹⁵⁷ Whyte observed that this model was deteriorating as the organization’s “functionaries” were intent on implementing the social in order to perfect group dynamics and smoothing out the rough edges of the white-collar worker’s personality so that he may fit into a premade mold.¹⁵⁸

Magazine articles which addressed themselves to the middle-class white man followed suit by noting that “the higher you go up in the social scale, the greater the tendency to turn anger inward and become depressed instead of furious,” and that a man “takes a job where he must show...eagerness and deference to the boss...then moves along to a...executive position where the slightest raising of the voice may be considered gauche.”¹⁵⁹ This suggests that the older conception of Marketplace Masculinity, which had given way to a version that was an Emersonian nightmare of debased self-sufficiency, was unable function under the present structure of the “personality economy”. In order for man in a corporation to amass great wealth, as historian Carlos Clarens notes about the liberal imagination’s view of the organization, he had

¹⁵⁶ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 69

¹⁵⁷ Cuordileone, “Politics in an Age of Anxiety,” p. 522

¹⁵⁸ Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, p. 235

¹⁵⁹ Theodore Irwin, “What Happens When You Get Mad.” *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. 174, No. 6 (Jun., 1959) p. 214

Havemann, “The Age of Psychology in the U.S.” p.77

to give in to “dehumanizing” conditions that “curtailed free will and moral judgment” as it entailed following an institutionally prescribed plan of advancement that demanded compliance from the workers in their aspirations towards executive jobs.¹⁶⁰

This discourse’s presumptions entailed a reassessment of the ideal masculinity but offered very few options to men as to what another metric of successful enactment of masculinity could be. To be sure, Riesman did not posit that men could only be inner-directed or other-directed (actually, he also suggested an ideal type which antedated these two which he called “tradition-directed”) but had a hope that one day a non-directed type he called the “autonomous man” would emerge. Nonetheless, it is clear that these critics believed that a considerable number of white-collar men masculinity were not of or in power.¹⁶¹ Moreover, neither Riesman nor Whyte suggested how men could be rescued from the pandemic of other-direction or conformity that was sweeping the nation. Seeing the organization as an unavoidable modality in an advanced economy, Whyte opined that once in the system men should try to find individuality *within* the system and *within* themselves and accept the inherent conflict between the organization’s goals and the individual’s desires.

Conformity, Masculinity and Medicine

Going further than the texts mentioned above in indicating the adverse effects of conformity on men, mental health professionals such as Robert Lindner and Abram Kardiner indicated a general tendency in psychology to explicitly identified manliness as coterminous with sexuality. However, specific to ‘50s, because of society’s pressures to conform, was the claim that the manhood was being undercut thus producing homosexuality. In this vein, it was theorized that “male homosexuality was an adaptational response to the burdens of manhood and thus...the causes of homosexuality [were] in external social phenomena.” Undoubtedly using Alfred Kinsey’s statistics from reports on American sexuality that had showed that homosexual behavior was not exceptional, they, unlike Kinsey who proposed that such behavior was non-pathologic and transhistorical, designated homosexuality as an affliction produced by societal conditions which was coterminous with diminished masculinity. Kardiner theorized that

¹⁶⁰ Carlos Clarens in Sobchack, *Screening Space*, p. 123

¹⁶¹ Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia,” p. 125

sociopolitical factors such as the “fear of annihilation” and, taking Keats’s argument further, that “the instrumental use of human beings” were causing a “flight from masculinity.”¹⁶² Moreover, he reasoned that homosexuality had to be a result of environmental factors as he conjectured that no biological explanation could account for the number of homosexuals doubling in the span of 13 years.¹⁶³ What is more, Robert Lindner commented in *Must You Conform?* (1956) that repressive sexual morality produced homosexuality. Although, as Escoffier notes, Lindner was a champion of non-conformity – echoing the radical psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich – he nonetheless saw “standard forms of gender behavior [as] biological norms” and homosexuality as a condition without which the world would be a better place.¹⁶⁴

However, as the Organization and Suburbia were responsible for the crisis in men’s minds, throughout the ‘50s there was mounting evidence that the combination of affluence and white-collar work produced a mindset that also undermined the male body. Conformity was given a medical dimension to bear what historian Jesse Berrett calls “weighty cultural burdens.” Consequently, health care professionals were enlisted and “fitness gurus” were created in the effort to alert and cure Americans of the sick, white middle class man.¹⁶⁵ Medical and mental health care professionals were finding that society had become inhospitable for manly displays of aggression and authority and that this led to a variety of physical illnesses. In this regard, popular science journalist Theodore Irwin answers the question “Can ‘swallowed anger’ poison you?” with evidence from a Northwestern University study that anger can indeed bring on “angina pectoris” which is caused by channeling rage into the socially acceptable “illness.”¹⁶⁶

Moreover, discourses on *stress* – a key term that came into widespread use in the ‘50s through the efforts of Dr. Hans Selye and Fred Kerner – and men’s hearts identified how psychological hardships endured by the white-collar worker were transformed into biological damage. Hardworking, ambitious and competitive men were those who were most vulnerable to stress and heart-disease. It had become clear that modern man had to navigate a society which repeatedly challenged his masculinity and health. Psychologist A.R. Lauer notes, in a 1957 issue of *Popular Science*, that “sports and the necessity of living [have] put a premium on a certain

¹⁶² Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’” p. 530

¹⁶³ Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’” p. 530

¹⁶⁴ Jeffrey Escoffier, *American Homo: Community and Perversity*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) p. 86

¹⁶⁵ Jesse Berrett, “Feeding the Organization Man: Diet and Masculinity in Postwar America.” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Summer, 1997) p. 806

¹⁶⁶ Irwin, “What Happens When You Get Mad?” p. 101

amount of male... aggressiveness.” Moreover, he goes on to state that it is from nature’s side “normal for a young man to be more *venturesome* than his sister.”¹⁶⁷ What this discourse seized upon was the need for the essential masculinity to find an outlet. Also, consider Dr. Funkenstein’s schema of types of anger: “in-anger”, which is directed inwards, and “out-anger” which is directed, often violently, outwards. Although he presents each as having their virtues in moderation, anger-in individuals are often more introspective, compassionate, learned and civilized. Thus, in this type anger needs an out, much to the frustration of the man in the oppressive “adult polite society”, if it is not to manifest itself in damage in myriad psychological and somatic ailments.¹⁶⁸

Chapter conclusion

As made clear in *Body Snatchers*, suburbia was complicit in creating a society of conformist men who were being coerced into cooperating and suppressing their natural urge to compete, and to consume rather than produce. Riesman and Whyte focused on men as isolated from the family, or the family as having been subjected to instrumental relationships because of social structures. Although neither of them proposed to overthrow the capitalist system, they at least thought that the middle-class man should be wary of the corporation’s collectivizing forces. Thus, their ideal of manhood went against the proposal of the cooperative and “mature” male, seeing that a character such as Commander Adams was nothing more than a uniform conditioned to be obedient by social engineers who believed that society should be harmonious and without pressures from the id.

¹⁶⁷ A.R. Lauer in Max Gunther, “Who are America’s Worst Drivers?” *Popular Science*, Vol. 170, No. 1 (Jan., 1957) p. 135 [my italics]

¹⁶⁸ Irwin, “What Happens When You Get Mad?” p. 102

Chapter 4:

Playboy and the Masculine Bachelor

Hugh Hefner launched his “gentleman’s” magazine in 1953 and was able to contribute to establishing, along with a host of other men’s magazines (*Esquire* and its middle-brow imitators *True* and *Argosy*, most importantly), what Pendergast has called the “Modern Man” by getting the American male to feel at home in the consumer culture.¹⁶⁹ The first issue stated, in a languid prose style, that at this magazine they were not about “out-of-doors thrashing through thorny thickets” – although apparently avid appreciators of alliteration – but “entertainment”. Going on, they state their modest, laidback ambitions, “If we are able to give the American male a few extra laughs and a little diversion from the anxieties of the Atomic Age, we’ll feel we’ve justified our existence.”¹⁷⁰

However, *Playboy* had a radical vision for men, namely that they were not necessarily in any rush – or had any plans at all – to marry. Crucially, the *Playboy* was imagined as wife-less. As such, *Playboy* defined itself against Overstreet’s conception “maturity,” and against any notion of domestic containment, in that it refused to acknowledge the virtues of heterosexual domesticity and the constitution of men’s identity through family. The magazine promoted an “extended period of play” for American men in a time of when, as Elaine Tyler May notes, “Those who came of age during and after World War II were the most marrying generation on record” with 94.1 percent for men and 96.4 percent for women.¹⁷¹

[I]n spite of widespread prosperity, the provider role was a heavy burden, and not all men could be successful at it. Nor was the status of the family breadwinner always adequate compensation for an otherwise monotonous or dissatisfying job. Just as material goods could contribute to marital harmony or even compensate for unhappiness to some extent, the failure to achieve or appreciate the fruits of prosperity could cause tension.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Pendergast,

¹⁷⁰ Editorial, *Playboy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1953) p. 3

¹⁷¹ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 20

¹⁷² May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 117

In the passage above, May locates many of the reference points for discourses which identified and purported to investigate the sources of uneasy masculinity in the '50s. Certainly, we may posit, such as Kimmel does for Western films, that the more strictures and disappointments men encountered in their ordinary lives, the greater was their need for extraordinary flights from reality. Moreover, we may conjecture that the masculine ideal of "maturity" proved disappointing to many men who had married too young to really have a shot at having a loving and deeply committed relationship with their wives, but were too pressured by demands of social propriety, impulses to marry before going off to war (either WWII or Korea) and feelings responsibility towards their children to break it off.

Perhaps, amidst all the social forces that pushed towards matrimony, breadwinning and reproduction, marriage for many men, felt like a "tender trap." What is more, as Osgerby notes, "the ability to conceive of oneself as the *kind* of man who *would* buy into the *Playboy* lifestyle" was more important than actually having the means to live out the life of a *Playboy*.¹⁷³ Therefore, if men felt browbeaten in their marriages, *Playboy* could carve out a space of masculine fantasy where men could be, as the author of article from *Life* commented with barely concealed admiration, the "male wolf [who] is always with us, providing as much temptation as he can to as many women as he can."¹⁷⁴ Nonetheless, examining the "why" of *Playboy*'s success is not our issue here, we will look at the "how." Moreover, author Herbert Gold, in an article, which ostensibly pointed out the hollowness of the bachelor lifestyle, for the working women's magazine *Charm*, noted the allure of the bachelor and how he served as canvas unto which a wife could project her longings for a "handsome, perfect cavalier" (Gold notes that the husband, however, was a bit more ambivalent).¹⁷⁵

***Playboy* and Non-Conformity**

Bachelordom, the alternative lifestyle that *Playboy* endorsed, was regarded as a dubious male condition. May notes one of the male KLS respondents characterizing his years as a bachelor as "the empty, aimless, lonely life".¹⁷⁶ Thus, *Playboy* needed to invest the bachelor life

¹⁷³ Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon," p110

¹⁷⁴ Ernst Havemann, "The Kinsey Report on Women." *Life*, Vol. 35, No. 8 (Aug., 1953) p. 46

¹⁷⁵ Herbert Gold, "The Bachelor's Dilemma." *The Age of Happy Problems* (New York: The Dial Press, 1962) p. 34

¹⁷⁶ May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 194

with positive content, promoting its masculinity as comprised of refinement in taste and the pursuit of sensual variation. However, it did this by negotiating a position within a matrix of discourses that was already constitutive of masculinity. Kenon Breazeale's suggestion that "Playboy could present as unspoken givens certain assumptions about the legitimacy of catering to male desire that Esquire had labored to justify and put in place" is not incorrect, but becomes too simple in accounting for the former's circuitous path to discursive constitution and legitimacy.¹⁷⁷ The most important of these discourses came through the delineation of sex as fundamental to masculinity. Consequently, foregrounding men as sexually voracious enabled, but did not cause, the popularity of the other non-familial and non-traditional aspects of masculinity. The Playboy broke the mold of both the Genteel Patriarch and Marketplace Manhood – in providing a novel version of masculinity where, with no live-in woman, the man was completely committed to, and in control of, his own work and his own domesticity. Hence, not only did *Playboy* maintain the sexual primacy of men but it also submitted that women, in roles other than as intermittent bedfellows, were unnecessary.

From the start, the Playboy was imagined to have enough means to live hedonistically and fashionably, but in order to afford doing so *Playboy* also confronted the reigning critical discourse's "conformity problem". The concerns of *Playboy* were linked to the concern with men's feminization in sphere of work, through mass consumption and certainly a feminization in domesticity. This is perhaps not too surprising given the champions of self-made man's tendency to focus on self-constitution as removed from biological origin. As Catatano observes about the self-made man, "The most specific negative appeal in a myth concerned with origins alludes to escape from the mother."¹⁷⁸ However, considering the alternatives, *Playboy's* solution was pragmatic: men should separate themselves physically from women, the embodiments of femininity. Contrarily, the previous chapter's critical observers operated with a conception of masculinity that was predicated on men finding their true masculine individuality solely in the world of work, and that change was first necessary in men's minds. This unwillingness to concede that men were suffering in ways that could not be healed by asserting individuality

¹⁷⁷ Kenon Breazeale, "In Spite of Women: "Esquire" Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer." *Signs*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Autumn, 1994) p. 19

¹⁷⁸ Catano, "The Rhetoric of Masculinity," p. 426

while letting the same social system that produced their misery remain, rendered them unable to conceive of such a social rearrangement.

With the individualism champions' attempted resuscitation of older models of masculinity, the inherent belief in the "separate spheres" model of gender went without interrogation. However, *Playboy* reimagined domesticity by insisting on, as Zaretsky notes about "conservative anti-rationalizers", "the instinctual and sexual bases of individuality as correctives to bureaucratization and conformity".¹⁷⁹ This meant that the Playboy could remain faithful to the ideals of autonomy even if he worked hard in the "personality economy" and participated in consumption, and it meant that he could be masculine even at home. Hence, what we will consider below provides an explicit alternative to what masculinity should be. However, we need to investigate closer what these "sexual bases" involved to find out how marriage, heterosexual domesticity, and consequently sex as wholly divorced from the imperatives of progeny and solely the province of desire fell outside the Playboy's ideal of manhood.

"Sexual Behavior in the Human Playboy"¹⁸⁰

Ehrenreich remarks "the major intellectual influence in [Hefner's] early life was the Kinsey Report."¹⁸¹ Specifically, Hefner's version of masculinity was beginning to take form back in his college years when he read and reviewed Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) while attending the University of Illinois.¹⁸² Hence, the sexual discourse underwritten by Kinsey was vital to *Playboy*'s inception by enlisting his work and committing what Gayle Rubin called the "fallacy of misplaced scale." This meant that *Playboy* used Kinsey's report on sexuality do heavy cultural work and burden it "with an excess of signification" in the process of male self-constitution.¹⁸³

However, this was not only a fallacy committed by *Playboy*. It was an undue emphasis given to male sexuality which was inherent in Kinsey's work and society at large. Kinsey, and Hefner as his "disciple", adopted the position of trying to demystify sexuality and ostensibly

¹⁷⁹ Zaretsky, "Charisma or Rationalization?" p. 346

¹⁸⁰ "Playbill." Editorial. *Playboy*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Feb., 1955) p. 2

¹⁸¹ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 44

¹⁸² Mark Jancovich, "Placing Sex: Sexuality, Taste and Middlebrow Culture in the Reception of *Playboy* Magazine." *Intensities*, Vol.1, No.2 (2001) p. 10

¹⁸³ Stevi Jackson, "The Sexual Self in Late Modernity." *The Sexual Self: The Construction of Sexual Scripts*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007) p. 5

speaking out against the “puritanical ideals of the traditional middle class” and in their missionary zeal to inspire a “healthy, adult interest in sex,” with Kinsey using somber writings on the function of the male sex and *Playboy* with its textual and pictorial content.¹⁸⁴ Indeed in the first issue of *Playboy*, in what amounted to a mission statement, read: “We believe...that we are filling a publishing need only slightly less important than the one just taken care of by the Kinsey Report.”¹⁸⁵ Moreover, Kinsey was an outspoken critic of sexual moralizing, which he saw as stifling Americans’ sex life. Kinsey rebuked of “sources of sexual inhibition” such as the church and the home.¹⁸⁶ However, undercutting Hefner more than Kinsey – whose research was more relevant to the ‘30s and ‘40s when he collected his data – the ‘50s was a decade when “puritanical ideals” were scarcely relevant as Freidan has commented; sex was an issue in public discourse and popular culture to a degree never witnessed before and, moreover, was a prime ingredient in the “feminine mystique.”

Moreover, in our first chapter we noted that the dominant discourse on male sexuality had already espoused the principle that masculinity entails a strong sexual appetite, and vice versa. This means that, at the time of *Playboy*’s publication, the diffusion of ideas akin to, and perhaps derived from, those in Kinsey’s work on men, such as the argument in Kinsey’s findings that it was typical for men to regularly engage in sexual fantasizing and that they have a low threshold for sexual excitation, were largely a part of the dominant discourse and thus did not require any special insight, “charisma” or courage to advocate.¹⁸⁷ This did not mean that *Playboy* was not inspired by Kinsey, but merely that the discursive conditions were configured in such a way that the acceptance of certain propositions about masculinity advanced by the magazine did not meet insurmountable resistance, but instead quite a bit of adulation.

The fervor with which science journalists followed suit in describing the supposedly fundamental sexual characteristics of men attests that this was a time where the cultivation of an particular kind of image of aggressive male sexuality had the potential to overflow the concept of domesticity. A 1956 popular science article, which investigated women’s reluctance to have sex, and a made strong case for the man invariably saying “yes” to sex because he was instinctually driven by cerebral factors influencing the psyche, was subtitled “Science now explains common

¹⁸⁴ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 40

¹⁸⁵ Editorial. *Playboy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1953) p. 3

¹⁸⁶ Irvine, *Disorders of Desire*, p. 38

¹⁸⁷ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 42

maladjustment that sends many good marriages to divorce court”.¹⁸⁸ In addition, that the author of the article states that for a man “being in love with his wife consists *first and foremost* in his satisfaction with her as a sexual partner” reveals the tentativeness with which marriage is viewed in a sexual perspective.¹⁸⁹ The author also noted that when thinking about nudity or watching his wife undress “men are likely to become amorous on short notice” and suggested that men could and did have “impersonal” sex, as he compared sex with in a tennis match where you did not have to admire your opponent to have “an exciting game”.¹⁹⁰ Another opined that now that Kinsey had found out the sexual premises of the genders we no longer needed the “various marriage counselors and psychologists who have pretended the greatest knowledge in the field.”¹⁹¹

Constructing a Radical Masculinity and Challenging Containment

Kinsey’s reports, for all their bio-medical orientation toward sex and meticulous enumerations, sold remarkably well. *Human Male* – and to a lesser extent *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) – provided powerful indictments against sexual containment. However, James Gilbert notes, it “took Hugh Hefner and *Playboy* to demonstrate the potential of [Kinsey’s] findings” and put the latter’s ideas into a properly social context.¹⁹² Consequently, the discourse that *Playboy* utilized for constituting the *Playboy* was based on Kinsey’s appraisal of “the material origins of all behavior”. Hence, *Playboy* appropriated Kinsey’s belief in human nature’s primacy and that humans’ natural behavior was intrinsically good (but for *Playboy* only insofar as this “nature” was heterosexual. Consequently, Hefner conveniently overlooked some of the more startling propositions that logically followed from Kinsey’s principled outlook. Among them was the rating scale that he formulated on the basis on the large number of male respondents who reported having homosexual encounters at least once in their lives. Consequently, Kinsey posited in *Human Male* that homosexuality exists in a continuum of behavioral tendencies rather than as an absolute indicator of identity. Additionally, he asserted

¹⁸⁸ Lagemann, “Why a Wife Says ‘No,’” p. 112

¹⁸⁹ Lagemann, “Why a Wife Says ‘No,’” p. 114 (My italics)

¹⁹⁰ Lagemann, “Why a Wife Says ‘No,’” p. 115

¹⁹¹ Havemann, “The Kinsey Report on Women,” p. 41

¹⁹² James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005) p. 77

that homosexuality has always been with us as a natural sexual and historical fact, so there is no reason to try to restrict it.¹⁹³

Thus, Alfred Kinsey's two comprehensive and controversial reports caused quite a stir in some quarters. Founder of Harvard's sociology department, Pitrim Sorokin opines in a '54 issue of *Time* that Kinsey's research embodies all that is wrong with America today as it provides statistical cover for homosexuals, pederasts, adulterers and prostitutes, while he likens Kinsey to an ancient Greek pedophile philosopher.¹⁹⁴ Many newspapers joined in, as Elizabeth Fraterrigo observes, in expressing the danger Kinsey's report posed to society by "authorizing" youths' moral upheaval.¹⁹⁵ Additionally, Kinsey's second installment *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) was contested only a few months after it came out by anthropologist Cora Du Bois who impugned that the study might reflect less the sexually excitable nature of men than it mirrors Kinsey's myopic biologism which, consequently, glosses over the social injunction of female propriety as a reason for women underreporting the frequency and intensity of their sexual arousal.¹⁹⁶ Of Kinsey's findings, *Playboy* incorporated some "facts" about heterosexual men that were not as popularly received.

Kinsey's zoologist background ensured a materialist and biologist study that was ostensibly undertaken according to the rational principles of behavioral science. Hefner was guided by Kinsey towards a "positive" – meaning not in the context of crime or delinquency – discussion of sex outside the bastion of heterosexual monogamy and as something undertaken without it being in the service of some higher political, moral or "spiritual" goal. Hence, in *Human Female*, Kinsey was not loath to remind the reader that some social sanctions on sex, to him, seemed ill-conceived. Thus, pointing to examples from the animal kingdom he maintains that the distinction between premarital and marital sex is absurd. Accordingly, he argues that save for the name the sexual act is in every respect the same.¹⁹⁷

However much this proposed erosion of conceiving sex as a differently sanctioned act dependent on marital status may seem like burgeoning gender egalitarianism, Kinsey's

¹⁹³ Janice Irvine, *Disorders of Desire: Sex and Gender in Modern American Sexology*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990) p. 47, 48, 53

¹⁹⁴ "OPINION: Sex or Snake Oil?" *Time*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Jan., 1954).

<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,819316,00.html>>. Accessed: 26.05.11

¹⁹⁵ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 38

¹⁹⁶ Cora Du Bois, "An Anthropologist's View of the Second Volume by Dr. Kinsey and His Associates," review of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* by Alfred C. Kinsey. *Scientific American*, Vol. 190, No.1 (Jan., 1954) p. 83

¹⁹⁷ Irvine, *Disorders of Desire*, p. 47

argumentation rested on the tenuous argument from nature which proposes viewing mankind's behavior through the prism of "lower animals" – effectively and arbitrarily transposing the human phenomena of gender onto animals – to the neglect of explanations which *explicitly* incorporate cultural factors. Hence, Kinsey commits the fallacy here described Keller:

[M]etaphors of gender can be seen to work, as social images in science invariably do, in two directions: they import social expectations into our representations of nature, and by so doing they simultaneously serve to reify (or naturalize) cultural beliefs and practices.¹⁹⁸

Thus, Kinsey's work is suffused with assumptions stressing the primacy of the *male* sexual drive that undercut the path-breaking status with which we accord the reports today.

True, Kinsey showed that women were more likely to have engaged in sex before marriage than the sexual morals of the day would indicate. However, he argued – from seeing a preponderance of men be serially unfaithful and have numerous premarital sex partners – that men had, as a result of inerrant evolution, developed a sexual capacity which made men naturally polyamorous. Thus, in Kinsey's logic it was a "biological imperative" that men stake claim to *multiple* women and that women, in turn, grant men sexual license. The cultural implication of this, despite Kinsey adamantly championed a "value-free" science, was that women were monogamous while men harbored an "ancient desire for multiple sex partners" and that this point of fact was mainly attributable to the male body's inherent capabilities and humankind's mammalian ancestors.¹⁹⁹ Thus, in Kinsey project of sexual emancipation male adultery was not decadent or wanton behavior but an expression of something healthy, natural and good while the cultural term and condemnation of such behavior was wrong.²⁰⁰

The issue of male promiscuity appeared in a July 1955 edition of the magazine. "A Vote for Polygamy," by Jay Smith, calls men's sexual desire "varietistic" and proposes that with the abolishment of monogamy Americans' "nerves" will improve. Additionally, as the author gives, in what seems compulsory in texts about non-marital sex, a nod to Kinsey, he is also quick to cite anthropological evidence for the choiceness of male promiscuity, using, as many social scientist were wont to in the postwar years, the "allegedly stable communities of pre-historic folk" as

¹⁹⁸ Keller, Gender and Science: Origin, History, and Politics." *Osiris*, Vol. 10 (1995) p. 33

¹⁹⁹ Irvine, *Disorders of Desire*, p. 48

²⁰⁰ Irvine, *Disorders of Desire*, p. 48

anticipating a “post-historic utopia.”²⁰¹ Moreover, he hoped that without monogamy, prostitution might once again become “what it was in the great days of Babylon – a fertility rite of beauty and meaning.”²⁰² This perception of male sexuality in the context of *Playboy* used a “scientific” grounding for the futility having just having one wife. Even though Smith was arguing for a system of polygyny, his emphasis that prostitution should once again become legitimate *alongside* multiple marriages shows that he wants matrimony not to be radically different from bachelordom. Consequently, Smith was, as Fraterrigo notes about most of *Playboy* articles on sex, “[holding] out the bachelor’s pleasure as the overriding concern.”²⁰³

Furthermore, Kinsey was an ardent critic of Freud’s theory of sublimation. Indeed, the adjustment discourse that insisted on the vital importance of “maturity” was in part inspired by the theory of sublimation that purported to explain the transferring of “sexual energy” into nobler pursuits, such as maintaining a nuclear family and hard work.²⁰⁴ This entailed that not having sex was not evidence of an individual diverting their energies into “higher things” as sexual energy, or “capacity” as Kinsey would have it, was non-transferrable, and that only biological deviants abstained from sex.

Distancing Men from Women:

The author Philip Wylie wrote in his *A Generation of Vipers* (1942), “I give you mom. I give you the destroying mother. I give you Medusa”.²⁰⁵ Wylie is an important name to note in *Playboy*’s disavowal of women as marriage material. Kinsey’s work had only demonstrated that men needed sexual variation, but not explicitly stated that cohabitation with a woman was wrong or dangerous. *Playboy*’s suggestion that women were a pernicious influence on men may seem defiant in a time maternity was, as Rogin comments, “sanctified.” However, there was plenty of writing on women that was negative in the ‘50s and that in order to legitimize bachelor domesticity Hefner and his editorial staff had to show that marriage was a precarious institution and that many, if not most, women were terrible creatures.

²⁰¹ Matthews, “The Utopia of Human Relations,” p. 358

²⁰² Jay Smith, “A Vote for Polygamy.” *Playboy*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (1955) p. 16

²⁰³ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 45

²⁰⁴ Irvine, *Disorders of Desire*, p. 49

²⁰⁵ Wylie in Rogin, p. 6

The magazine started on the offensive with its article “Miss Gold-Digger of 1953” which was a three-page rant against alimony written by Burt Zollo under the *nom de plume* Bob Norman. The article, which appears in the premier issue of *Playboy*, disparages the alimony laws’ generosity towards women in as they make it financially unwise for a man to enter into wedlock. Moreover, it is a diatribe against greedy women. Wives seeking divorce, he suggests, manipulate the alimony laws to their advantage in “hooking in” men and, through the courts, demanding 50 percent of what their soon-to-be ex-husbands possess of wealth and 50 percent of what they will make in the future. The article ends with a warning to men against Gold-diggers, “She’s after the wealthy playboys, but she may also be after you.”²⁰⁶

Playboy tapped into established discourses with a tradition of female demonization that discouraged women’s transgressions unto traditionally masculine domains. The hyperbole that occasionally characterized this discourse, as historian Robert Genter observes, would seem to imply that “American men had...abdicated control of the home, the neighbourhood [sic], and the workplace to their wives.”²⁰⁷ Many of these tactics of policing women were mentioned in chapter 2, where examples of women supposedly overstepping their gender boundaries were used in the maintenance of the sexual division of labor. However, this position was amplified in *Playboy* in an attempt to advance a compelling case for men staying away from the social influence women and, as a result, avoid the discontentment and draining of masculine vitality that “maturity” portended.²⁰⁸

During WWII and in the immediate postwar years, there was established a discourse, though less sophisticated in their choice of culprit than Riesman and Whyte, which suggested that men were suffering feminization by sinister mothers or wives. Wylie, a fervent critic of the damning influence of women, commented in *Vipers* on “mealy look of men today” and put to “Mom” that it was her fault and spurred on the public discussion on “Momism”. Wylie is significant in *Playboy*’s advancement of bachelor masculinity as he directly contributed to the magazine’s portrayal of women as he authored several articles featured in its pages. Moreover, even before Wylie wrote a word for *Playboy* he had been creating discursive fodder for the magazine’s broadsides against exploitative women. Not content to lash out at mothers, in *Vipers*

²⁰⁶ Bob Norman, “Miss Gold-Digger of 1953.” *Playboy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1953) p.8

²⁰⁷ Genter, “We All Go a Little Mad Sometimes”, p. 152; Rogin, “Kiss Me Deadly,” p.7

²⁰⁸ Carrie Pitzulo, “The Battle in Every Man’s Bed: Playboy and the Fiery Feminists.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (May, 2008) p. 262

he reproaches the opposite sex for its internalization of the “Cinderella Myth” which “produced an idle class of married women whose husbands worked to support them.”²⁰⁹

However, “Momism” advanced the notion that overbearing women were leaving deep psychological scars in men. Moreover, Wylie’s contribution to this discourse established a demonic version of domestic ideology.²¹⁰ Consequently, he used the presumptions of normative masculinity and femininity to claim that the type of heterosexual relations it caused were poisonous to men. Wylie portrayed mothers as malcontents whose labor had been made redundant by industrialism and who vengefully set out to deceive men into giving her money and attention, and dominate their sons to the point of brittleness.²¹¹

Also in the vein of Momism, psychiatrist Frederic Wertham posited that maternal domination occurred in such severity and with such pervasiveness that American families were revealing a new kind of psychodrama he termed the “Orestes complex”. Through the myth of Orestes – who by killing his mother, whose lover had killed Orestes’s father, avenged his father’s death – Wertham argued that he captured the dynamic between a son who resents his mother for damaging his father’s, and thereby his own, masculinity through her overbearing behavior in the home and in public.²¹² Nevertheless, we can find insights gleaned from *Vipers* recurring in less explicit forms over a decade later as women were still being blamed for men’s troubles.

The charge of maternal overprotection and domination and its consequences reappears in a 1959 article entitled “What Happens When You Get Mad?” The author observes that in cases where men show acute anxiety “the mother looms prominently in authority, the father often being a mild Caspar Milquetoast.”²¹³ A 1957 article in *Scientific American* rehashes the assumptions Momism. The article’s author, a psychiatrist, proffers that male Irish-American patients evince pathologies as a result matriarchal arrangement that is typical of the Irish household. He argues that through the mother’s overbearing influence on her sons they become afflicted with low self-esteem, feelings of guilt and anxiety, and a fear of women; dispositions

²⁰⁹ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 33

²¹⁰ Rogin, “Kiss Me Deadly,” p. 6

²¹¹ Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*, p. 41

Genter, “We All Go a Little Mad Sometimes”, p. 151

²¹² Michael Rogin, “Kiss Me Deadly,” p. 6

²¹³ Irwin, “What Happens When You Get Mad?” p. 214

which he indicates apply to non-pathological Irish-American males in general, but that are prone to appear in any male raised in the same family arrangement.²¹⁴

As men constructed women depending on how they perceived masculinity to be threatened – which in no way was a univocal discourse – the mid-century U.S. articulations of failed women were various and often contradictory. A concern was with how overly ambitious mothers perpetuated the male “sexual complex”, passing it from one generation to the next cohort of vulnerable young boys. John Cotton, a New York psychiatrist weighed in that the conditions of gender reversal had led to passivity and sexual dysfunction in men. In effect, he alleged that some men had become so feminized that they had lost the capacity to become tumescent. The conclusion was clear: could be very damaging to men. In trying to combine work and motherhood, women had become unhappy with themselves and frigid, hence, sexually frustrating their men and inflicting neuroses on their sons who, they posited, might very well become the Adolph Hitlers of their generation.²¹⁵ Hence, this intimates Fraterrigo’s observation on power and gender: “Whether they focused their energies exclusively on the home or ventured outside of it, women were charged with trying to usurp power from men.”²¹⁶

Moreover, Wylie updated his antiwoman stance witnessed in the “Cinderella Myth” of *Vipers* to incorporate the criticisms of the corporation. In his 1956 article for *Playboy*, “The Abdicating Male... and How the Gray Flannel Mind Exploits Him through His Women”, he claimed Madison Avenue was producing miserable women through advertisements which played on female vanity. Wylie goes on to argue that wives forced their “cowed” husbands, who to Wylie’s great lament had become totally ignorant of style, to fork over the cash to buy myriad useless things.²¹⁷ This “woman-slanted” consumer culture, he claimed, had created a situation where, according to some unnamed “economists and statisticians”, “American Womanhood controls about 80% of the capital wealth of the nation.”²¹⁸ In his quest to see to it that victimized men were freed from tyrannical female influences, without crossing *Playboy*’s own agenda of getting men interested in consumer goods, Wylie asks rhetorically: “*Why have American men built a civilization for women, then sweated themselves into early graves to sell it to women, and*

²¹⁴Marvin K. Opler, “Schizophrenia and Culture.” *Scientific American*, Vol. 197, No. 2 (Aug., 1957) p. 110

²¹⁵ Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*, p. 41; Rickie Solinger, *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America*. (New York: New York University Press, 2005) p. 136

²¹⁶ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 29

²¹⁷ Philip Wylie, “The Abdicating Male... and How the Gray Flannel Mind Exploits Him through His Women.” *Playboy*, Vol. 3, No. 11 (1956) p. 23

²¹⁸ Wylie, “The Abdicating Male,” p. 24

*finally willed their earnings to women? What is the method of this calamity?*²¹⁹

The Playmate

Consequently, with this provenance of skepticism towards most women *Playboy* created a scenario where women undercut masculinity at every turn. Moreover, supposedly with the science to prove it, women were an “other” from men in a very fundamental way. This was a different response to the “masculine mystique” which Betty Freidan suggested men were enduring. Freidan put forward that men were suffering under the yoke of stoicism while “suppressing fears and tears.” Her solution was that once men got in touch with their feelings they would understand that both sexes were betrayed by the feminine mystique.²²⁰ However, in an ironic twist, *Playboy* made it so that men were the only victims of a culture that cultivated separate spheres. Hence, with the ample “evidence” of women’s inner succubus and the presumption that men had very little in common with women, *Playboy* proposed that the bachelor life was the only sensible choice for a man who wished to be happy.

However, the specter of homosexuality that shrouded the bachelor had the potential to undercut the legitimization of playboy masculinity, the pictures Playmates in its pages evidenced that this magazine was for and by red-blooded heterosexual men.²²¹ Hefner was adamant about nurturing an image of sexual edginess by dispensing with the norms of domestic and sexual containment, though this necessitated positioning his magazine as pitted against homosexuality.²²² Thus, in a 1957 interview with Mike Wallace, Hefner remarked – clearly showing that his allegiance to Kinsey was situational – “There is something wrong, either psychologically or glandularly [sic], with some guy who isn’t interested in pictures of pretty girls.”²²³

Previous efforts to blame women for men’s woes only proffered conceptions of what women should be to men as non-working wives or mothers. However, with *Playboy*’s emphasis on male sexual desire as essential to masculinity (and their sales) they needed women to fit his

²¹⁹ Wylie, “The Abdicating Male,” p. 50

²²⁰ Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique*. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1981) p. 272

²²¹ Osgerby, “The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon,” p. 104

²²² Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 40

²²³ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 41
“Mike Wallace Interviews *Playboy*.” *Playboy*, Vol. 4, No. 12 (1957) p. 83

non-committed lifestyle. However, this was not unproblematic as the women that interested the *Playboy* should not be seen as sexually delinquent or deviant and certainly not as unfeminine. We may glean the contours of this quandary from a 1953 article in *Life*. The article's author proposes two versions of femininity: one, an inauthentic, unfeminine and sexually available image of women created by the men in Hollywood that he alleges matches masculine desire in every way, and the other, the average woman of real life who is sexually "disinterested, unresponsive and in fact sometimes downright frigid."²²⁴ The latter image of women presented an obstacle to *Playboy*. The magazine acknowledge as much when it printed a letter from one 24-year-old W. Ray Dennis, Jr. from San Diego. In response to one of its articles Ray wrote, "[In] this unfit to be published article... [you] have stated that all women 'like to be seduced. I do not agree with you at all [...]." Dennis went on to suggest the author of the article thought this way of the opposite sex because he had consorted with "nothing but the lowest women in character and morals".²²⁵

The solution came with the *Playmate* which became a permanent fixture in the magazine from its second issue (indeed, the first issue had a nude pictorial of Marilyn Monroe called "Sweetheart of the Month", but as Fraterrigo observes, they changed epithet as it smacked of too much commitment).²²⁶ Aiding in removing the tawdry connotations present in other men's magazines was the stylistic choice of printing the nude pictorials in full color, high gloss centerfolds as opposed to the standard black and white pictures of nudes on pulp paper. The more expensive color glossy was to reflect that this was a high quality product, while giving the *Playmates* names diminished the sense that these were women who wished to remain anonymous out of shame. Hefner proffered to his readers: "Actually, potential playmates are all around you.... We found Miss July [1955, Janet Pilgrim] in our circulation department, processing subscriptions, renewals, and back copy orders."²²⁷ Hence, in 1955 when *Playboy* went from regularly featuring professional models as centerfolds to using "found talent", the *Playmates* were to impart a sense of having a biography and be genuine, everyday person. Fraterrigo notes

²²⁴ Havemann, "The Kinsey Report on Women," p. 41

²²⁵ W. Ray Dennis, Jr., "Don't Hate Yourself: An Open Letter to Jules Archer." *Playboy*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1956) p.4

²²⁶ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 42

²²⁷ Hugh Hefner in John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) p. 303

how Hefner consciously manipulated the props and settings, producing the *effet de réel*, so that “the surroundings [are] logical and the girl real to the reader.”²²⁸

In the Playmate *Playboy* constructed the opposite – and emphasized the precarious nature – of aggressive and assertive women; career women who had become men’s competitors in the job market, and the matriarchs who had produced passivity in men by. *Playboy*’s emphasis “heterosexual virility” meant that in promoting their fresh, young, wholesome, wide-eyed American girl, the Playmate had to be sexually available without seeming sexually aggressive. The images of Playmates suggested, as Ehrenreich comments, “what awaited the liberated male.”²²⁹ Jules Archer, in a 1956 article entitled “Will She or Won’t She”, urges the reader to identify that being a Playboy can be a reality. Moreover, in another Archer piece, “Don’t Hate Yourself in the Morning”, he casts the Playmate as woman who can be seduced, because not far beneath the surface lurks, as the Playboy has learned from Kinsey, a sexual creature. Archer goes on to suggest that a woman will take a man’s “failure to make a pitch [i.e. a sexual proposition]...as an indication that she is about as desirable as a garbage truck.”²³⁰ However, the Playboy on the prowl had to be on the lookout for non-playmate material such as “professional virgins” or masculine women who could never, or only with sustained effort, “be had” and were, as such, a waste of his time.²³¹

Playboy at Work

Playboy advocated an intensity of work that was concomitant to, or even surpassed, Overstreet’s heroic father. However, for the Playboy, the instrumentality of work was not towards the ends of a supposedly indolent, thankless spouse; he worked hard and amassed wealth to enjoy the serious business of his own pleasure.²³² Fraterrigo notes that *Playboy*’s emphasis on the work hard work it takes to live the life of a Playboy also was a part of the Hefner’s attempt to navigate the existing discourses on morality.²³³ Nevertheless, we may note that this injunction to work also entailed a specific relation to the work ethic as a part of a healthy masculinity, and

“Playboy’s Office Playmate.” *Playboy*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (1955) p. 26

²²⁸ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 41

²²⁹ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 49

²³⁰ Jules Archer, “Don’t Hate Yourself in the Morning.” *Playboy*, Vol. 2, No. 8 (1955) p. 48

²³¹ Jules Archer, “Will She or Won’t She.” *Playboy*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1956) p. 13

²³² Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 46

²³³ Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, p. 49

ultimately a tactic to legitimize bachelordom by employing the historically sanctioned Marketplace Manhood.

Nonetheless, *Playboy* imparted that the Playboy was somehow above, or apart, from the rat race while taking part in it. The magazine featured the satire of Shepherd Mead, as part of his ongoing “tips to succeed in business without really trying.” Mead ridicules the corporate system by suggesting elaborate ploys of faking your way to the top of the organizational hierarchy (in order to get promoted from the occupational limbo entailed in being a Junior Executive, he advises growing a mustache as it will “add years and a look of sly cunning”).²³⁴ No doubt, these texts allowed the white-collar man to look at his situation from a detached and ironic vantage point and perhaps even feel more in control as a result.

These pieces emphasized that like the “adjusted man” the Playboy’s identity was not only grounded in his work. Rather, the Playboy was an effect of the culture and goods he consumed. However, the detachment with which it was suggested that the Playboy viewed his work situation hearkened to the awareness that Whyte insisted the gray-flannel-wearing men maintain while working for the organization, “He knows that he can never fully ‘belong.’ The continuity he seeks in his life is work that satisfies *his* drives, and thus he remains the always a potential rebel.”²³⁵ Therefore, satire on the organization put forth that the Playboy was only superficially like the adjusted man, whereas the man truly given over to other-direction or the Social Ethic had no choice in following the dictums of his higher-ups. On the contrary, the Playboy was to be much more like Riesman’s ideal of a masculinity that had shed both inner-direction and other-direction,

A person here defined as autonomous may or may not conform outwardly, but whatever his choice, he pays less of a price, and he has a choice: he can meet both the culture's definitions of adequacy and those which (to a still culturally determined degree) slightly transcend the norm for the adjusted.²³⁶

²³⁴ Shepherd Mead, “How to Stop Being a Junior Executive.” *Playboy*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (1954) p.43
Other articles in the same vein by the same author are “How to Apply for a Job.” *Playboy*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (1954) pp. 11–14; “The Top of the Heap.” *Playboy*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (1954) pp. 13–14

²³⁵ Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 165 (Author’s italics)

²³⁶ Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, p. 243

Slighting Suburbia: Promoting the “All-Round Urban Man”

If *Body Snatchers* and Riesman highlighted that man’s condition in suburbia was threatened, then *Playboy* was the only mainstream social text that told Miles Bennell what he should do once he escaped. *Playboy* suggested the urban and cosmopolitan penthouse as the ideal site for the liberated man. In certain respects this resonates with Riesman’s the *Lonely Crowd* and his article “Suburban Dislocation” with a reassertion of the city (or cities) as culturally vital as we may speak “conceptual power” of urbanity signifying masculinity. Additionally, Riesman noted that the city had “qualities of possibility, often, rather than of actual use”.²³⁷ In this regard, *Playboy* offered its readers an arts and entertainment guide starting in November of 1955, which exclusively focused on New York City and Chicago events and eateries.

In addition, *Playboy* emphasized the youthful energy of urban subcultures – lest we forget the urban, “emancipated” girl Alice Dunham – which the *Playboy* had access to while living in the city. However, the links to the urban Beats, clustered as they were in and around New York and San Francisco, does not end with Miss July 1956. Herbert Gold presented a fairly negative picture of them in “The Beat Mystique” (February, 1958). However, the magazine pleaded, and eventually got Jack Kerouac write a rebuttal, of sorts, in the following year. The Beats or the Hipsters were not exactly models of masculinity for the *Playboy* but showed that the magazine was urban-oriented and culturally voracious and relevant. Furthermore, besides a shared proclivity towards misogyny and casual sex, the Hipster and the *Playboy* both loved and avidly consumed jazz and worshipped jazzmen.

A theorist of the suburban (or the even more lavish “exurban”) versus urban lifestyle, August Comte Sectorsky – who after joining *Playboy* as an “assistant to the editor” in 1956 had been elevated to “associate editor” by April of 1957 – authoritatively weighed-in, in an encapsulation the *Playboy*’s view of his own urbanity, in the article “Exurbanites at Play”. In this piece he lampooned the exurbanites’ fervent and exhausting regimen of leisure once the weekend rolled around. Moreover, it was evident to him that these people who had left the city behind were still anxious to hear the latest news from the metropolis, greedily devouring gossip on the occasions they asked their urban friends out for the weekend. City life, in Sectorsky’s opinion,

²³⁷ Riesman, “The Suburban Dislocation”, p. 141

allowed a man to stay in touch with culture and enjoy “from one to five cocktail parties a week, know the city’s “superior restaurants”, be a “regular theatergoer”, a “patron of the cinema” (movie theaters where they showed foreign movies), be a nightclub cognoscenti, and all this without having to commute.²³⁸ This was echoed in a more modest statement by Riesman, “there were values concealed in the most seemingly depressed urban conglomerations which were lost in the move to the more hygienic and aseptic planned communities.”²³⁹

Consumption and Playboy Masculinity

Rid of his dependents, *Playboy* proffered that the man could now use the contents of his wallet to purchase items as a matter of self-expression; as a matter of masculinity. Consequently, the leisure promoted by *Playboy*, and what Ehrenreich calls “fun morality” was more than enough to resolve men’s stress-induced ailments.²⁴⁰ Allied with the individuality discourse about dangers of strenuous white-collar work, coupled with health care experts’ contention that arduous, competitive recreation were wearing out the male body bodies, *Playboy*’s emphasis was placed on, to the contrary of Cuordileone’s demonstration of the reigning “hard” discursive figuring of men, an ability outside of work to be soft and to “ease up”, enjoy life, lounge in his exquisitely decorated apartment and, as its title implied, “play.”

Through making naked women a feature of the magazine and insisting on the Playboy’s wish to bed them, *Playboy* was constructing itself as heterosexually secure and secured in a discourse of male sexual license. Although its “upper middle-brow” literary content made it plausible, as the cliché goes, to “buy it for the articles”, showing female skin was of course very much a prerequisite for a magazine which in large part was composed of writings about and pictures fashion, interior design and cooking – in short, interests usually relegated to women.

However, it should be noted that life of the American gentleman did not begin in 1953. As Osgerby notes, “the nineteenth century saw an extensive ‘bachelor subculture’ evolve based on the network of eating houses, barber shops, tobacconists, tailors, city bars and theatres that

²³⁸ A.C. Spector, “Exurbanites at Play.” *Playboy*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1957) p. 21, 34

Pitzulo notes: “He [Spector] originally made a name for himself with a best-selling book, *The Exurbanites*, that was a critique of postwar American suburban life.”

²³⁹ Riesman, “The Suburban Dislocation”, p. 144

²⁴⁰ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men*, p. 45

prospered on the patronage of affluent young bucks.”²⁴¹ Additionally, *Esquire* had already been around since 1933, with the aforementioned Hefner working there before starting *Playboy*, and although *Esquire* promoted a masculine, “non-conformist” mode of consumption the circumstances in the ‘30s to the mid ‘40s were not of the sort of middle-class affluence seen in the ‘50s. Hence, the financial and productive conditions for realizing the *Esquire* lifestyle were more readily available in the postwar era with an overall rise in living standards, by which time *Esquire* had moved away from its promotion of a sensualist lifestyle to focus on quality articles.²⁴²

However, it is important to be aware that consumption per se was not new to men. Indeed, a gentleman culture existed as a sub-cultural phenomenon, but also consumption existed within the dominant culture though without being coded as mass consumption. Hence, the coding of workbench/workshop of materials such as power tools for “home improvement” as masculine removed such consumption from scrutiny, even though these were effectively purchases of mass-produced items that went towards leisure. This equipment was seen as necessary in its instrumentality towards the manly pursuit of building things. However, in the world of the *Playboy*, consumption was not a form of sublimation or feminization; it was a vital component of manhood.

The magazine acted as a manifesto for the consuming adult man – aged, according to a 1958 survey, between 18 and 34 – making their publication and readership open to criticisms of being peer-influenced other-directed.²⁴³ Nonetheless, as we noted in chapter 1, in the ‘50s the gradual consensus was moving away from the self-denying aspect of the male breadwinner role. Moreover, besides criticizing women as money-grubbers, Wylie’s “The Abdicating Male” carried with it a message that men were being duped by the consumer market. Thus, in appealing to a sense of masculine pride (by ridiculing the man who cannot even pick out his own tie), Wylie urged men to take the market back from women and become conscious consumers.

Certainly, then, *Playboy* was involved in the work-to-consume ethic: The May, 1956 issue advertises for such male indispensables as “a travel and home bar”, offers a style feature promoting brand-name hats called “Heads, You Win”, an “attire” text on suits for the “man-about-business” advising him on details about fabric composition and on the best brands to

²⁴¹ Osgerby, “The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon,” p. 101

²⁴² Osgerby, “The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon,” p. 104

²⁴³ “Meet the Playboy Reader.” *Playboy*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1958) p. 76

consider when purchasing a light-weight suit for summer, a travel feature about the marvels of Portugal, a piece on brandy appreciation, and advertisements for steakhouses and other restaurants.²⁴⁴

The comingling of sex and consumption in *Playboy* suggested that sexual capacity and capacity to purchase consumer goods worked together. That consumption signifies more than its use value (a “sign value”) was enthusiastically acknowledged by *Playboy* which promoted consumption as a disposition of male desire and as an exercise of luxurious bricolage for male cultural constitution. Moreover, the act of consumption links back to the Playboy’s sexual object of desire, the Playmate. Hence, with the foreclosure of any deeper and lasting relationship with women, as Breazeale suggests, women became “‘types’ aphoteosizing some aspect of American culture” which, like the Playboy’s affinity for fine wines, jazz and design, could be a part of his varied cultural consumption.²⁴⁵ Consequently, the social situating of the Playmates allowed not only the women to become “more real”; it permitted the imagined Playboy to venture, through sexual desire, to otherwise closed-off or remote socio-geographical sites.

Lari Laine, Playmate for May 1958, was positioned in upper to upper middle-class social setting of a country club where the captions relate that in her social circle you will find millionaires and celebrities. Moreover, Alice Denham, Playmate in July 1956, provided a chance to partake – or in the parlance of bell hooks “eat the other” – in the seduction of a young woman who was an aspiring novelist living amidst the Beat poets in New York’s bustling bohemian art scene. hooks’s proposition is that, in this case, the white male uses sexual encounters with Others in the belief that this will allow them to transform themselves or transcend and travel into an “unexplored terrain”; the Playboy’s removal from women made him invest ever more fantasy into their image. In *Playboy*’s quest for masculine power the racially innocuous white woman had become more “othered” through sexual essentialism, and Denham, the young Playmate, is furthermore an “other” to the dominant conception of women as mothers and wives and, thus, offered a more luscious fantasy. However, the Playboy is ultimately never in a position to give up the privileged site of looking, “commodifying” the difference between the woman and

²⁴⁴ *Playboy*, Vol. 3, No. 5 (1956)

²⁴⁵ Breazeale, “In Spite of Women”, p. 15

himself – and the differences *between* women – thus, he always remains in power as a consumer.²⁴⁶

Even as the editorial staff at every turn maintained the magazine's heterosexuality, *Playboy's* abolishment of the nuclear family, and with it a guarantor of a modicum of masculinity, meant that in the 1950s the *Playboy* could not articulate many of dominant discourse's cultural markers of masculinity – e.g. it could not constitute male subjects as fathers with patriarchal authority. *Playboy* negotiated between the dominant discourse and the less family-oriented conception of masculine “autonomy” of the cultural critics (Mills, Whyte, Riesman, Greenberg, etc.) that subscribed to a skeptical view of the fleeting and fickle commodity market. Thus, *Playboy* marked itself off from the bland pop tastes of the mainstream middle class, emphasizing the reader's individuality and taste through its focus on “niche” aspects of culture; by presenting its readers with literary content and social satire; with its extensive coverage of jazz; and by situating the ideal reader in an urban rather than suburban environment. Thus, *Playboy* reinforced the “emerging notions of masculine selfhood” and abetted in the removal the shame of male conspicuous consumption and promoted what cultural elitists might call middle brow, but can also be seen a process of destratifying culture and changing masculinity as well as femininity.²⁴⁷

Chapter Conclusion

Hence, latent in the matrices of discourses on masculinity, emphasizing man's authority thwarted at home by a domineering and perhaps working wife by whom he is humiliated by, we have its converse radical discourse on masculinity which emphasizes that men are essentially obligated only to satisfy themselves. *Playboy* dispensed with the Genteel Patriarch but not completely with the Marketplace Manhood ideal of business prowess. However, Freidan, as opposed to a “Wyliean” blaming of the women themselves, faulted the system of the feminine mystique for producing currents in the early 1960s, which suggested that men sought divorce or extramarital affairs to escape their wives' “aggressive home career” and vicarious living through

²⁴⁶ bell hooks, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance.” *Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) pp. 366–380

²⁴⁷ Osgerby, “The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon,” p. 101
Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*, p. 262

them.²⁴⁸ As it pertains to this discourse, this was only partially correct: the suggestion of male flight from heterosexual domesticity did in fact consider the overbearing wife and matriarch, but in the pages of *Playboy* the talk about “tears and fears” was nowhere to be found. Male self-realization could be had by inverting and insisting on the many of the things Freidan wanted for women: something more than a wife and children, and his own home hence accepting the dominant discourse on female boredom and male exhaustion.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique*, p. 262

²⁴⁹ Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, p. 262

Kimmel’s quote from Freidan reads: “I want something more than my husband and my children and my home.”

Chapter 5:

Concluding Remarks and Suggestions for further Research

Insecurity about men's own roles proliferated in an era where the "managerial ideology," an effect of the U.S. transition to a postindustrial society, threatened time-honored enactments of masculinity that had ensured power and prestige for white men. Through this exploration of the postwar decade's discourses on masculinity, I was struck by how conservative the so-called liberal intellectuals were in their view of the possibility of men grounding their identity as breadwinners *and* nurturing fathers. Conversely, the dominant discourse on masculinity that stressed an emphasis on the family through domestic containment was harsh in its imperatives for women, but surprisingly permissive for men in terms of exploring their "softer side" through fatherhood (even though mostly in a limited way as a pattern for their sons' proper, male socialization). However, that the less domestically inclined Marketplace Masculinity loomed as a threatening specter of male life was acknowledged through discourses on prejudice and totalitarianism. Articulated through sociological studies after WWII, this discourse made it clear that men who were not taking an active and emotionally engaged part in their children's lives were dooming them and the country to fascism and continued racism.

With their limited constitution of masculinity, the social critics in the individualist discourse were confounded by the postwar years' affluence and the disappearance of possibilities of self-employment and production-oriented labor and the growth of mass forms of consumption and entertainment. In sounding the alarm that indicated that men were becoming toadies for big business (and bureaucracies in general) and cultural dupes they wanted the values of earlier masculinities to persevere into the allegedly classless society. The masculinities they held forth as admirable had historical roots in the industrial and pre-industrial U.S. and, naturally, were inscribed with the imperatives of marriage and family formation. However, and this is where they caused friction with domestic containment, Marketplace Masculinity, and to a lesser degree the Heroic Artisan, did not have explicit considerations for men caring for their families in any way beyond breadwinning. Thus, they could only insist that if men were to avoid the tension and emasculating circumstances they saw as the consequence of the rigidly defined system of

supplication and cooperation in a “centralized and bureaucratized society” they would have to keep working with a renewed focus on competitiveness and an inner sense of self.

Playboy’s mixture of outright misogyny and fixation on attractive women signaled the commoditization of the female body. Its anti-woman stance was predicated on bashing the female social roles that *Playboy* rather simplistically (and erroneously) faulted women themselves for having created. The long line of female demonizing that *Playboy* pursued existed in the dominant discourse’s efforts to maintain the primacy of men’s roles breadwinners in a time when an increasing number of women were moving into the U.S. workforce. However, these tactics of female de-legitimization lent themselves to hyperbole in the pages of *Playboy* in order to promote the bachelor lifestyle. Meanwhile, the widespread acknowledgement that men were sexually insatiable and promiscuous meant that the Playboy needed women to tend to his needs. Nevertheless, this sexual need also followed the logic of consumption and the injunction that Playboys should *sample* all that life has to offer.

This brings to the fore the question of domestic containment has remained in the background as the ideology I have wished to “de-center.” The individualism discourse’s critique of suburbia did not explicitly dispel domesticity as an ideal. Rather, this discourse pointed out that domesticity in its current form was unhealthy for and, as suburbia was allied with the organization, complicit in collectivizing and feminizing men. The masculinity championed by the liberal critics did not envision the suburban father as happy, but rather as a victim of pressures to consume and to work in a job that he secretly despised. Nevertheless, as this discourse did not directly challenge domestic containment it did prove compatible with a cultural which did. *Playboy* was from the outset adamantly against marriage. In many ways, this was *one* of the logical outcomes of the individuality discourse, as the obvious culprit when one talks of “feminization” is the influence of women. In the *Playboy* vision of masculinity, the man had all the money he earned for himself and his own desires, as he had no dependents and no wife.

The Playboy masculinity’s grounding in sex, bachelordom and consumption was, for all its discursive precedents, a new combination of cultural meanings. Once the individualism discourse’s subdued fear of feminization and concurrent insistence on individuality, and the adjustment discourse’s emphasis on sex and consumption, were outlined (the Playmate was, after all, present in a more demure form in the nubile *Forbidden Planet* character Altaira), it was not difficult to see why a cultural text such as *Playboy* came into being, grew in popularity

throughout the '50s, and legitimized Hefner's vision for a bachelor masculinity that went against domestic containment.

It might be more prudent then to say that *Playboy*, and to lesser extent the individualism discourse, existed *because* of domestic containment. This is more in line with a view of discourse that accommodates the deployment of discursive elements in negotiating and challenging positions of dominance. Seen this way, the dominant, or normative, masculinity's emphasis on cooperation, balance, fatherhood, breadwinning and adjustment always entailed its opposition as the field of discourse was, and is, invariably contested.

As this thesis rides rather roughshod over some finer points of discourse, there are many areas where further research can deepen our understanding of masculinity in the postwar/Cold War era. From the chapter on *Playboy* there are several directions left unexplored. Tom Pendergast's *Creating the Modern Man* is illustrative in this respect. In Pendergast's monograph, he examines several men's magazines stretching from 1900 to 1950 comparing them to each other and looking at developments in the magazines over time. His goal is to find out how these magazines helped constitute the modern, consuming man. Thus, instead of relating *Playboy* to other discourses on masculinity it would perhaps be fruitful to examine the magazine in relation to other men's magazines like *Gent* and *True* in the '50s and '60s. With this research, it would be interesting to find out which stance on domestic containment and ways of being masculine was being championed going into the era of civil rights issues and second wave feminism.

The chapter on individualism is also amenable to more research. Taking the lamentations of conformity at face value, we may endeavor to find others ways in which men escaped from the supposed drudgery of white-collar work. The flight into DIY has already been mentioned in connection with Gelber's research. However, this is not the complete picture of masculine recreation in the '50s. *Playboy*, as we noted, explicitly stated that it was not about thrashing about in the outdoors. An interesting analysis of masculinity as it pertains to domestic containment would of men that *did* frolic, hunt and fish in nature in the '50s. This research could incorporate textual sources in the form of magazines, reports from the Audubon society, as well as advertising from national parks and interviews on men's recreational habits. An interesting aspect of this research would be to find evidence of homosociality in era that seems to have discarded fraternity as it was associated with "immaturity."

Moreover, research on the liberal trope of “the artist” as an exemplar of masculinity could reveal an affinity between the criticism of the middle-class and the growth of the Beats and Pop Art in the U.S. In my chapter on the conformity critics, I was not able to develop this point further because of its limited relevance to the aim of this text. However, if we pursue the “artist” in this discourse we will more than likely find a burgeoning *subversive* masculinity (as opposed to the radical conservatism of the Playboy) that runs across lines gender and sexuality or perhaps an even more staunch assertion of a masculine essence legitimized by art.

Concerning film as entry point to discussions on masculinity, the comparison of film remakes can in many instances be useful in tracking discourses over time. Katovich and Kinkade have analyzed *The Thing* in its three iterations (from the ‘50s, ‘70s and ‘80s) in order to look for changes in social science perspectives. Although they also briefly touch on *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and its identically titled remake released in 1978, another direction can be taken by exclusively focusing on the three versions of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (a third remake was made in 2007 with the title *The Invasion*). In comparing the movies, we would look at how the motif of escaping conformity changes, and examine what this would imply about conceptions of masculinity in the respective eras. The periodization would also be fascinating in this research, as the first movie is pre civil rights, the second is post civil rights and the third is post 9/11. Such an analysis would have implications beyond masculinity and perhaps point to changes in the salience of the origins of the invaders as a function of a redrawn enemy threat.

This analysis of the three versions of *Body Snatchers* could also be undertaken by relating the three eras’ scientific theories about men. As we have seen in the 1956 version the psychiatric/psychoanalytic knowledge about men was rejected in favor what the movie presented as a more genuine and instinctual type of knowledge embodied by Miles. However, the scientific rationalization used in order to try to dupe the protagonist in the other versions can tell us a great deal about which method of “explaining” and legitimizing the behavior of men is considered viable (though not necessarily dominant).

Forbidden Planet can be seen in comparison to *Star Trek*. As noted earlier, Gene Roddenberry’s work with *Star Trek* was apparently inspired by the film. Even without this direct link, this comparison would reveal the different versions of futuristic societies espoused by the two texts and the two very different historical conditions they were made (1956 for *Forbidden*

Planet and 1966–1969 for the original series of *Star Trek*). This might show us changes in gender, as well as ethno-racial, attitudes and tell us more about the social conditions of the era.

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